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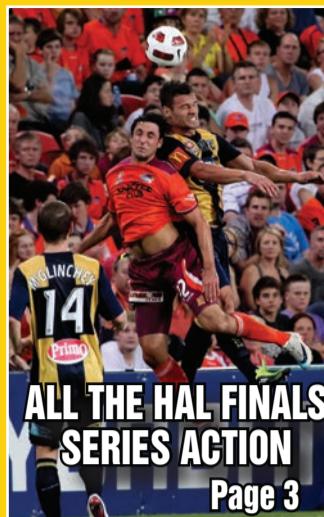


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THE FUTURE IS ORANGE!

BRISBANE ROAR BOOKS HOME HAL GRAND FINAL

END OF SUMMER SALE NOW ON ACROSS ALL STORES

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Les Shorrocks's Action Packed Picture Page



The Mariners silence the home crowd after Daniel McBreen broke the deadlock on the night.



Roar keeper Michael Theoklitos is at full stretch but can't reach Oliver Bozanic's curling wonder shot to put the Mariners 2-0 up in the tie and level the aggregate at 2-2.



Tempers flared near the end of the match with so much at stake.



Over 25,000 fans turned out to witness the pulsating contest and are rewarded with a home grand final.



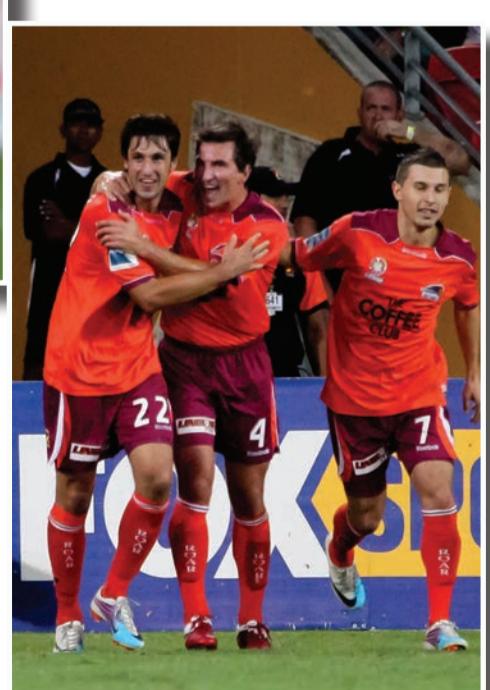
Ange Postecoglou now aims for his fifth national league title as a coach and player.



Mariner Michael McGlinchey and Roar's Kostas Barbarouses fly high in the aerial battle.

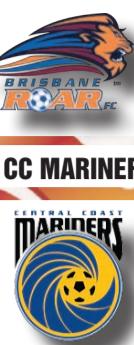


Mariner's keeper Matthew Ryan clears the danger from Solorzano.



Roar's Thomas Broich scores and ignites the comeback.

BRISBANE ROAR

2
1
2

CC MARINERS

Brisbane Roar 2
(Broich 63', Henrique 90+1')Central Coast Mariners 2
(Smith 39'(og), Bozanic 40')

Roar wins 4-2 on aggregate

Referee: Peter GREEN

Crowd: 25,168

Venue: Suncorp Stadium, Brisbane

Brisbane Roar: 1. Michael THEOKLITOS (gk), 2. Matthew SMITH, 4. Shane STEFANUTTO, 5. Ivan FRANJIC, 6. Erik PAARTALU, 7. Kosta BARBAROUSES, 9. Jean CARLOS SOLORZANO (8. Massimo MURDOCCA 74'), 15. Matt MCKAY (c), 17. Mitch NICHOLS (10. HENRIQUE 57'), 22. Thomas BROICH, 23. Milan SUSAK.

Subs not Used: 20. Andrew RED-MAYNE (gk), 12. Matthew MUNDY, 14. Rocky VISCONTE.

Yellow Cards: Nil

Red Cards: Nil

Central Coast Mariners: 20. Mathew RYAN (gk), 2. Daniel McBREEN, 3. Joshua ROSE, 4. Pedj BOJIC, 6. Patrick ZWAANSWIJK, 8. Rostyn GRIFFITHS (24. Bernie IBINI ISEI 81'), 10. Patricio PEREZ, 11. Oliver BOZANIC, 14. Michael McGLINCHEY, 18. Alex WILKINSON (c), 23. Adam KWASNIK.

Subs not Used: 30. Paul HENDERSON (gk), 7. John HUTCHINSON, 17. Chris DOIG, 22. Mustafa AMINI. Yellow Cards: McGlinchey 28', Bozanic 41'. Red Cards: Bojic 90+3'

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Brisbane Secure Grand Final

By Jarrod Ellis

After a dominant season that's featured a still ongoing record unbeaten streak Brisbane took the penultimate step to securing their maiden A-League championship, defeating the Central Coast Mariners 4-2 on aggregate despite only drawing 2-2 on Saturday night.

A week after escaping from Bluetongue Stadium with a 2-0 lead, Brisbane looked in real trouble at 2-0 down at half-time, but second half strikes from Thomas Broich and Henrique salvaged the tie and booked the club's place in the Grand Final.

Brisbane had the early running of the game dominating possession, but were almost caught out by the visitors in the 16th minute.

Patricio Perez was the source of the chance, collecting a pass just to the right of the penalty spot but the Argentine blasted his shot high and into the crowd.

The home side reacted to the close call, pouring forward in numbers, their play almost rewarded with a goal only to find Mariners keeper Mathew Ryan in top form.

Kosta Barbarouses was the Brisbane player looking most likely to open the scoring, denied first by Ryan after being played into the area by Broich, then again only minutes later after the Kiwi combined well with Mitch Nichols to unlock the Mariners defence.

Brisbane continued to threaten, Matt Smith unable to convert a headed chance from a corner in the 31st minute, the ball bouncing wide of the far post and out.

The Mariners appeared troubled by Brisbane's corners only a minute later Smith headed the ball back in from the far post where Solorzano looked to put it in but was denied thanks to some desperate defending from Daniel McBreen.

Brisbane's championship hopes took a hit in the 39th minute, when against the run of play, Central Coast Mariners took a 1-0 lead.

Stealing into the near post McBreen collected a cross before hitting a shot from a tight angle that was denied by



The Brisbane Roar are all smiles after deservedly clinching a home grand final set for Sunday March 13th. Photos: ADRIAN GAGLIONE

the legs of Theoklitos, only to then ricochet into the net off an unfortunate Matt Smith.

Things then went from bad to worse for Brisbane only a minute later as Oliver Bozanic hit a curling shot from outside the area that left a stretching Theoklitos' helpless.

The home crowd of 25,168 was silenced amidst the knowledge that the Mariners' two quick goals meant the sides went into the changing rooms with the aggregate score reading 2-2 and the Roar faced their biggest challenge of the season to date.

The second half continued in much the same vein as the first, the Roar and Mariners both probing for an opening in the others defence but unable to find a killer pass in the final third.

With an air of apprehension seeming to settle over Suncorp as time wore on, Brisbane's star import Thomas Broich rose to the occasion in the 69th minute to salvage the tie for his team.

Collecting a pass from Matt McKay on the right of the penalty area, the German dribbled unchallenged along the byline before sending a

low shot at the form of Ryan that found the keepers leg before bouncing into the Mariners net.

The Mariners continued to look for a third goal, Theoklitos forced into a superb save from John Hutchison, the midfielder sending a header across goal from a cross that almost caught the Brisbane custodian out.

From there the action was end to end, each team seeking that killer blow that would secure their place in the final match of the season.

The visitors continued to threaten the Brisbane goal and were desperately unlucky to not record a third away goal in the 79th minute.

An unmarked Patrick Zwaanswijk was only centimetres from meeting a brilliant cross from Rostyn Griffiths, the ball then almost bouncing into the net on its own momentum.

Kosta Barbarouses resumed his battle with Matt Ryan in the 89th minute, the Brisbane striker skipping through the Mariners defence before sending in a low shot that was blocked by the legs of the keeper.

The final moments of the

match saw frantic football on show and just as the match entered stoppage time Brisbane confirmed their appearance in this year's grand final when substitutes Massimo Murdocca and Henrique combined for Brisbane's second.

Finding himself with acres of space and the goal in clear sight, Murdocca unselfishly cut the back to his Brazilian teammate, who powered his first-time shot past Ryan to send the home crowd into raptures.

Brisbane Roar coach Ange Postecoglou was pleased with the result but admitted it wasn't easy at times against the Mariners.

"It was a typical finals game, two teams going at each other," he said.

"I guess from our point of view it's a good result and we achieved our objective but we made things a little bit hard for ourselves and we had to fight for it."

"We had some chances early on and didn't take them, we weren't as clinical as we have been in the past, we weren't as crisp and we got done by two sucker-punches, right after each other."

SHORT PASSES

CALLING ALL FALCONS FANS

Falcons 2000 SC will be celebrating their 50 year history in May this year. The club would like to contact as many past players and supporters as possible to invite and enjoy the event. Please contact Bob Ashdown at Falcons or visit www.falcons2000.com.au for further information.

DURANTE JOINS SFC FOR ACL

Wellington Phoenix has allowed captain Andrew Durante to join Sydney FC for their Asian Champions League campaign. There is no need for Phoenix fans to panic though, the popular defender will be back in a black and yellow shirt for the start of the next Hyundai A-League season.

Sydney FC approached Phoenix management with a view to them signing Durante.

"Obviously I was keen to go because it will be a fantastic experience."

"I missed out playing in the Champions League two years ago when Newcastle Jets qualified because I was joining the Phoenix. To get a second chance is amazing."

BANKWEST PARTNERS WITH WA FOOTBALL

Football West is pleased to announce that Bankwest has signed on to become a major partner of the game in Western Australia.

Bankwest has agreed to a two-year deal with the sport's governing body and will specifically target supporting two key areas of the game - female football and officiating.

FOXE ANNOUNCES HIS RETIREMENT

Sydney FC defender and former Socceroo Hayden Foxe has announced his retirement from professional football.

Foxe, who joined Sydney FC midway through the 2009/10 Hyundai A-League season and went on to score a penalty in the Sky Blues Grand Final win over the Melbourne Victory that season, informed his teammates at training yesterday. The 33-year-old played 26 games for Sydney FC, including 16 in season 2010/11. His decision is effective immediately.

Throughout his stellar career, Foxe played at the highest level in Japan (Sanfrecce Hiroshima), Holland (Ajax), Belgium (Mechelen) and England (West Ham, Portsmouth and Leeds) and represented the Socceroos on 15 occasions, including the 1996 and 2000 Olympic Games.

"Everyone has had an impact in some way on my career from people behind the scenes to coaches and of course the players. I want to thank them for that," Foxe said.

"It has been a rollercoaster ride. The highs have been really high while the lows were low but I wouldn't change anything."

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Les Shorrocks's Action Packed Picture Page



Two goal hero Shane Smeltz.



PHOTOS: ADAM BUTLER



Matthew Leckie's effort puts the home side 2-1 up.



Miron Bleiberg is all smiles after his team completed an underdog effort.



Shane Smeltz celebrates after hitting a screamer and putting the visitors into a shock lead.

JOHN CLARK'S KISS OF DEATH



Mariners Vs Gold Coast

The Mariners will host Gold Coast United on Saturday night after a weekend of breath taking finals football. In a great showcase of just how far the A-League has come in six short years Brisbane, Central Coast, Adelaide and the Gold Coast played out finals that will be remembered for years to come.

On Saturday night the Mariners headed to Suncorp Stadium knowing that anything less than a 2 goal victory would not be enough to automatically

qualify for the Grand Final. They fought bravely in the first half and were rewarded for their efforts close to half time when Daniel McBreen's speculative shot was deflected in by Matt Smith. The Brisbane defenders hardly had time to assess what had gone wrong before Oliver Bozanic's spectacular finish saw the Mariners 2 goals to the good on the night and back level in the tie. The Roar began the second half patiently and there amazing resolve and self belief lead to them retaining the lead in the tie through a smart finish

from Thomas Broich. On review of the goal, Matt Ryan will be disappointed to have let the crafty German smash the ball past his near post, but it was one of his few mistakes for the night. Knowing that they only need one more goal to advance to the Grand Final the Mariners through caution to the wind, but this lead to them being vulnerable on the counter and the Roar's Brazilian maestro Henrique finished superbly, to keep the Roar's 27 game unbeaten streak intact. The Gold Coast on the other hand was brilliant, winning a

five goal shootout with Adelaide United on Sunday afternoon. New Zealand international Shane Smeltz was in scintillating form scoring two goals and playing a major role in the third. After losing Jason Culina to Newcastle during the week, Clive Palmer must move heaven and earth to keep Smeltz on the books if the Gold Coast are to continue to be amongst the upper echelon in the A-League. After quite a dull first half on Sunday it was Smeltz who lit the contest up with an amazing long range strike to give Gold Coast the lead. After the

break the game opened right up and goals to Sergio Van Dijk and German bound striker Matthew Leckie sent the home crowd into raptures and it was hard to see the visitors turning the tide. But the Adelaide faithful had barely found their seats when the Gold Coast evened up the scores through former Red Bruce Djite. Then with little over 10 minutes left Nigel Boogaard fouled Joel Porter and Smeltz, after initially having to retake his spot kick, coolly converted to send Gold Coast through.

It is hard to see who holds the advantage in this tie, in their previous meeting at Bluetongue Stadium this season it was the Gold Coast edging it 3-2 after second half goals to Steve Pantelidis and Andrew Barisic. On that occasion though there was no

Patricio Perez or Shane Smeltz. In these sides most recent clash however it was the Mariners taking the spoils 3-1 in front of a pathetic crowd of just over two thousand at Skilled Park.

Expect Graham Arnold's side to take plenty of heart out of that brilliant performance against the Roar on Saturday night, they will try and get their plethora of creative midfielders on the ball this Saturday, where as the Gold Coast will look to cramp them for space, probably sitting back and looking to attack the Mariners on the counter. Unless there is an early goal I don't expect there to be much in this one, but the home crowd and massive self belief should be enough to get the Mariners over the line, possibly in extra time. (Prediction: Mariners 1-0 Gold Coast)

WEEK 3 HYUNDAI A-LEAGUE 2011 PRELIMINARY FINAL
Sat, 5 Mar 2011 Central Coast Mariners v Gold Coast United

WEEK 4 HYUNDAI A-LEAGUE 2011 GRAND FINAL
Sun, 13 Mar 2011 Brisbane Roar v Winner Preliminary Final

VENUE Bluetongue Stadium

LOCAL KO AEDT KO
7.00pm 7.00pm

VENUE Suncorp Stadium

LOCAL KO AEDT KO
4.00pm 5.00pm

ADELAIDE UNITED



2

GOLD COAST UNITED



3

Match Details

Adelaide United 2 (Sergio van Dijk 56' (pen), Mathew Leckie 70')
 Gold Coast United 3 (Shane Smeltz 38'79'(pen), Bruce Djite 71')
 Sunday, 27 February 2011
 Hindmarsh Stadium, Adelaide
 Referee: Chris Beath
 Assistant referee: Brad Hobson and Nathan Macdonald
 Fourth official: Ryan Shephard
 Crowd: 15,028

Adelaide United: 1.Eugene GALEKOVIC (gk), 3.Nigel BOOGAARD (2.Robert CORNTHWAITE 90'), 6.CASSIO, 8.Adam HUGHES, 9.Sergio VAN DIJK, 10.Marcos FLORES, 11.Andy SLORY (19.Mathew LECKIE 40'), 12.Paul REID, 13.Travis DODD (c), 14.Cameron WATSON (17.Iain RAMSAY 84'), 16.Dario BODRUSC

Substitutes not used: 20.Mark BIRIGHITTI (gk), 21.Francisco USUCAR,

Yellow cards: Nigel Boogaard 78'

Red cards: Nil

Gold Coast United: 1.Glen MOSS (gk), 2.Steve PANTELIDIS, 3.Michael THWAITE (c), 6.Dino DJULBIC, 7.Zenon CARAVELLA, 8.ANDERSON, 9.Shane SMELTZ, 11.Bruce DJITE (19.Andrew BARISIC 88'), 13.Bas VAN DEN BRINK (14.Joel PORTER 70'), 15.Tahj MINNIECON (24.John CURTIS 81'), 33.Peter PERCHTOLD.

Substitutes not used: 16.Kristian REES, 20.Scott HIGGINS (gk)

Yellow cards: Shane Smeltz 38', Bruce Djite 47', Bas Van Den Brink 54', Steve Pantelidis 82'.

Red cards: Nil

Gold Coast's Grand Final dream gets closer

By Neil Favager

GOLD Coast United's Grand Final dream is very much alive after a dramatic 3-2 win over Adelaide United in the Elimination Final at a sweltering Hindmarsh Stadium.

After producing a team performance full of grit, determination and guile, Miron Bleiberg's men advanced to a Preliminary Final date with Central Coast Mariners next Saturday and are now just one win away from meeting local rivals Brisbane Roar in an all Queensland finale to the 2010/11 season.

It was a pulsating game that had everything; spectacular goals, controversial decisions, a twice taken penalty and two teams who both came back from a losing position to gain the upper hand as the match swung one way then the next.

But it was Gold Coast's fight back from 2-1 down that crucially turned the game in their favour, further evidence of the determination rippling through this United squad.

Striker Shane Smeltz will once again grab the headlines after giving Gold Coast the lead with a contender for goal of the season, then keeping his nerve late in the game to slot home the match winner from the penalty spot.

In between, Adelaide fought back admirably to gain the upper hand after levelling thanks to a Sergio van Dijk penalty and taking the lead courtesy of a Mathew Leckie strike in the 70th minute.

Smeltz had earlier tested Eugene Galekovic in the home goal before opening the scoring with a strike of true quality that the Adelaide custodian had little chance of saving.

From a seemingly harmless position all of 30 metres from goal, Smeltz turned his man before crashing a simply unstoppable strike past the helpless 'keeper. It was a stunning goal, the ball



Gold Coast's Bruce Djite levels the scores for the second time much to the anguish of Adelaide United's Cassio and goalkeeper Eugene Galekovic. Photo: ADAM BUTLER

tearing into the top corner of the net leaving the home crowd silent and giving Gold Coast a precious lead to protect.

Last weekend's hero, Dino Djulbic, almost doubled Gold Coast's lead in the opening minutes of the second half when he connected strongly with a Peter Perchtold free-kick, only to watch in frustration as his header came back off the post before being cleared to safety.

Adelaide were given a lifeline back into the match when referee Chris Beath awarded a 55th minute penalty to the home side for a foul in the box by Bas van den Brink. Sergio van Dijk stepped up and drilled the ball home, leaving the game finely balanced for a rousing finish.

The tails up, Adelaide were shooting on sight with Van Dijk and Boogaard both trying their luck from long range as Gold Coast dug in to weather the storm.

The pulsating match hit boiling point midway through the half with two goals in two mad minutes. First, the home side took the lead when Moss could only parry Cassio's shot into the path of Leckie, who hooked the ball past the Gold Coast custodian off the inside of the post.

But Miron Bleiberg's crucially hit back inside 60 seconds. Tahj Minniecon was the architect, his cross finding Smeltz who headed towards goal. Galekovic did well to block his effort but Djite was lurking with intent and nodded

home from close range to square the scores once again.

The goal put wind back in Gold Coast's sails and with 11 minutes to go they struck the vital blow. Joel Porter hurtled towards goal only to be felled by Nigel Boogaard and referee Beath again pointed to the spot.

Smeltz thumped the ball past Galekovic only to have his celebration cut short as he was ordered to retake his spot-kick after the referee spotted some encroachment into the box from Cassio and Djite.

But Smeltz showed nerves of steel to once again find the net and set up a mouth-watering clash against Central Coast Mariners next Saturday in Gosford.

SHORT PASSES

LUGT LEAVES SYDNEY FC

Sydney FC and Chief Executive Officer Edwin Lugt announce that he will leave the Hyundai A-League club.

Lugt, who joined Sydney FC in September 2009, will remain at the Club until the end of the 2011 AFC Champions League campaign in May. He will pursue his career either in Australia or overseas.

BEN SIGMUND PHOENIX

PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Ben Sigmund has been named the club's Player of the Year. The award is decided by points given by the coaching staff throughout the season.

Other Phoenix awards winners include Under-23 Player of the Year: Marco Rojas; Media Player of the Year: Marco Rojas; Players' Player of the Year: Manny Muscat; Top Goal Scorer: Chris Greenacre; Members' Player of the Year: Manny Muscat

AIS CAPTAIN GOOD SIGNS FOR HEART

Melbourne Heart FC has launched its off-season recruitment campaign with the signing of Australian Institute of Sport Captain Curtis Good. A stylish left-sided central defender, Melbourne-born Good has inked a multi-year deal with Heart, continuing the Club's commitment to promoting elite young talent which was a focal point of the side's maiden campaign.

SMTV on C31

South Melbourne FC in association with Canvas Media is proud to announce that SMFC TV on Channel 31.

SMFC TV has moved to the new time slot of Wednesday 7pm, with a replay of the program each Saturday morning at 9am.

CULINA SIGNS WITH JETS

The Newcastle Jets are pleased to announce the signing of current Socceroo, Jason Culina.

In a major recruiting coup for the Newcastle Jets, the Socceroo Midfielder will join the club on a 3-year contract.

Culina confirmed today that he was excited about being part of this new and exciting period for the Newcastle Jets.

"I am really looking forward to the next three years. I believe Newcastle has commenced a unique phase in the Club's history, for both players and for supporters" said Culina.

ZEBRAS PREPARE FOR 2011

Whittlesea Zebras took on A League side Melbourne Heart as part of their pre-season preparation at Epping Stadium. Melbourne Heart proved far superior on the night playing several first team regulars including Beauchamp, Sarkies, Behich, Thompson, Kalmar, Hoffman & Worm. Whittlesea trailed 0-1 at half time, but managed to draw level in the second half, before quality told in the end with Heart scoring two further goals.

JETS PROMOTE SIMIC

Newcastle Jets are pleased to announce the signing of Mario Simic on a 1-year contract.

Simic, a product of the Newcastle Jets Youth League team has been a standout this season earning a promotion to the A-League side at the back-end of season 2010/2011.



Joel Porter does a balancing act with the ball on his head.

Photo: ADAM BUTLER



Adelaide keeper Eugene Galekovic uses his head too!

Photo: ADAM BUTLER

The state of Victorian football

By Robert Di Fabio

THE instalment of the sixth Hyundai A-League season encompassed many changes on and off the pitch. An abundance of quality players playing their trade on our shores and the upmost superior technical standard of play witnessed since the inauguration of the reenergized competition has seen major improvement in the standard of play. The accumulation of mid-week fixtures has allowed clubs to build the intensity and assemble a higher benchmark in fitness levels while strength and conditioning standards have also been making amends.

Notably for Victorian football, the catalyst of a new franchise was brought into fruition. The red of the city would make their presence felt- Melbourne Heart was installed as the 11th A-League club giving the competition its first true cross-town derby.

Victory's supremacy on Melbourne

Once a monopoly driven market, the Victory took full advantage of their powers in the opening five seasons of the competition. A successful winning formula with the likes of inspirational captain Kevin Muscat in company with marquee man Archie Thompson helped bring the Victory to life. The club helped rejuvenate football within Victoria, growing their fan base and surpassing previous football clubs on and off the pitch in the upmost professional manner. Football was making significant inroads in the mainstream media, a prospect which was rather difficult in the later stages of the now defunct National Soccer League. Triumphing obviously helped the cause- winning the decorated double crown on two occasions by claiming the Premiers Plate and in also the Championship prize is held in high regard.

However, the cultural elements and atmospheric emotions illustrated by the fans were the major selling points for Victory. In contrast to the other football codes in Australia, Victory's style of support encompassed a rather unique and emotional sense of passion which is an exclusive trait that is not evident in the other codes. Fans were allowed to be actively involved rather than being an ongoing spectator. Amid the success the club had, it built a winning formula for the club on and off the pitch. Finally people who were not affiliated with football previously truly started to understand and appreciate the cultural components the game held around the world.

Despite the fact that Victory was building their dominance on the Melbourne marketplace not everyone was a fan of the outfit. With former VIS head coach Ernie Merrick at the helm and controversial inaugural captain Kevin Muscat leading the team many fans within the football community held their opinions on the Victory playing style and other facets the club inherited. For some people, winning football games didn't correspond towards an emotional bond with the club.



The first meetings between Heart and Victory indicate a true A-League rivalry has been born.

Photo: DANIEL FLIS

A changing of the guard

Ultimately, the 2010-11 season the city of Melbourne was split into two. Melbourne Heart- the red side were the 11th team pioneered into the A-League. Initially many people were sceptical and had their doubts that football could support two professional teams' given Victory's dominance since the A-League's inception; although the rivalry proved to be a success and brought out the true passion exhilarated between the sets of fans. An innovative logo, colours, name and playing style were seen as a positive for Victorian football.

Melbourne Heart's football philosophy was one of their major selling points. Heart brought in a trio of experienced names including John van't Schip, a former assistant coach for the Dutch national team and Ajax and in addition the head coach of FC Twente. The inclusions of Sydney FC's championship trio- John Aloisi, Simon Colosimo and Clint Bolton along side Josip Skoko, Gerrard Sibon and Rutger Worm were a few names which created a buzz around the club's foundational season. Van't Schip's 4-3-3 Dutch philosophy and style of play- retaining possession and moving the ball forward in a quick and efficient manner was a major talking point.

Derby culture

The three derby encounters were all closely contested with both outfits claiming a victory while the finale ended all square with a 2-2 stalemate. The excitement, flare, passion, hatred, rivalry, animation and enthusiasm were all brought to life throughout each fixture. Reminiscent of all derby encounters around the world, bragging rights were up for grabs. Many fans take these encounters as a higher priority over their rightful table placing when recalling the season that has been. Whether it's in the office, having a beer with a mate or in the school yard, claiming rightful ownership over one's city is what defines a

true derby.

In some respects, Victory can claim ownership for this season given their higher placing on the table- 5th in contrast to Heart's 8th. However, Victory's supporters have been left to feel aggrieved following the team's early exit in the finals-series, going down 1-0 to Gold Coast United in the opening week.

Looking forward to next season

Victory

Many Victory followers feel that it's now a time for transition for the club after the recent retirement of influential leader Kevin Muscat and a season which many believe the club underachieved. Unfortunately, Victory will in all likelihood lose two young exciting prospects. Robbie Kruse, 22, is seemingly on the outer with speculation linking him to Fortuna Dusseldorf in Germany's second division following a decorated season which saw him take the A-League by storm while also making a big impression on Socceroos' coach Holger Osieck at the Asian Cup.

While Mate Dugandzic, 21, has had a falling out with officials and has refused to sign a contract extension, consequently Victory has left him out of the ACL squad. Speculation is escalating that a move to rival Heart is not too far away.

Assuming the two youngsters depart, it is of more importance that Costa Rican Marvin Angulo signs an extension. His loan deal expires at the conclusion of the ACL's initial stage. Angulo took some time to adapt to the Australian style, although his technical ability on the ball and fluency in and around his team-mates is a major asset for the club to retain. A massive loss to the attacking foray if he departs Victory.

Exciting young prospect Isaka Cernak, 21, has signed a two year contract and has joined the Victory for their ACL campaign. The talismanic attacking-midfielder joins the Melbourne club follow-

ing the uncertainty surrounding embattled club North Queensland Fury.

In addition, former Olyroo shot stopper and Perth Glory number one Tando Velaphi, 23, will also join the club for their ACL campaign, signing a two year deal. With Michael Petkovic's one year agreement ending at the conclusion of the current campaign, there have been no indications whether he will be retained for next season.

Furthermore, speculation is mounting that Wellington excitement machine Marco Rojas, 19, will be crossing the Tasman to join Victory in the upcoming season. The electrifying versatile attacking winger who can function centrally or wide made an impressive onslaught during the second half of the A-League season. He is said to also be interested in joining Adelaide United, however reports are suggesting that Victory is favourites to land the youngster. Rojas' signing would further enhance Victory's depth and would ease the pressure given the likely departures of Dugandzic and Kruse.

Youngsters Petar Franjic and Diogo Ferreira both of whom did their apprenticeship with the Victory youth team are both bright prospects for the Melbourne outfit following a season which saw both demonstrate vigour and mental strength to work their way into the starting XI. With the departure of Muscat following the initial stages of the ACL, Franjic will have a greater opportunity to show his worth next season.

Last week Victory also announced the re-signings of veteran defender Rody Vargas and holding midfielder Billy Celeski on one and two year deals respectively.

Victory's ageing core of players- Thompson, Allsopp, Brebner, Pondeljak, Vargas and Kemp are all in their 30's. The recent younger signings will help the cause. The squad needs to be revitalised in order to be competitive and stay in touch with the benchmark

teams. A combination of potent youth and experienced players is the correct recipe for a winning formula. An imbalance of either and the team will not live up to its potential. With Muscat endorsed as a full-time assistant coach, he's impact on the squad could be imminent. Given Victory's towering standards, a top four finish is a minimum requirement.

Heart

In contrast, the inaugural campaign of Melbourne Heart was passable given it was their opening season, without being exceptional. Heart showed glimpses of their potential and at times but illustrated the lack of depth and cohesion in their squad. An influx of older players aged over 30 years was unfortunately the major issue surrounding the club. At times they were value assets to the team in the bigger fixtures; however the reliance on their abilities was brought under criticism following an invasion of injuries to key players.

The retirements of Socceroos' legends- Josip Skoko and John Aloisi and furthermore Dutchman Gerrard Sibon are big losses in terms of experience. Nevertheless it will provide an opportunity for the club to sign younger prospects who won't be as susceptible to injury.

Heart have already bolstered their squad for the next campaign by signing exhilarating Australian Institute of Sport captain Curtis Good on a two year deal. The central defender will add much needed depth following a season which saw Matt Thompson occupy the position as a makeshift centre half.

John Didulica, general manager of football operations is thrilled with the capture of the young defender.

"We feel as if we have picked up the number one draft pick," he said. "As captain and a key central defender, Curtis was one of the outstanding players at the AIS which in our view makes him one of the most promising players in Australia."

"Long term, our recruiting strategy is to build from the bottom up, so to be able to bring in another exceptionally gifted young player to the team to compliment our core of existing experienced players is exciting."

The signing means 19 players are registered in Heart's squad for 2011/12, with seven under the age of 20. The composition of quality youth is great for the club, however an appropriate balance of players in between the young and the old is necessary. If the club wants to make a significant impact on proceedings next season then more quality players in their mid to late 20's need to be signed in order to have a noteworthy impact throughout the complete season.

A finals appearance would be the minimum aspiration for the new franchise next season following an inaugural season which encompassed highly inconsistent performances on a weekly basis. Given it was Heart's inaugural season it was understandable amid a new football department, coaching staff and squad. A much more reliable and heady season is what the fans will be expecting.

SHORT PASSES

PERTH CLAIMS CHARITY SHIELD

Reigning State League champions Perth SC have claimed the second title up for grabs in 2011, after a 1-0 victory against Stirling Lions in the Football West Charity Shield. An early second-half strike from Perth defender Shaun Kilkeelly was the difference between the two teams, despite the Lions having several chances to find the back of the net. Big game specialist Ludo Boi was named the Alan Beale medallist after an outstanding performance in a losing side.

GEORGIES BACK AT CHAPLIN RESERVE FOR 2011

Sunshine George Cross was officially notified by Football Federation of Victoria Competition Manager Michael Pocklington that Chaplin Reserve will be the club's home ground in 2011.

This was gratifying news for the club after spending one season playing home games at the Knights Stadium in 2010.

It was a monumentus task to get the ground up to standard required, but with sheer hard work and dedication the tsak was achieved. Sunshine George Cross applied to the F.F.V. to return to their home ground for this coming season and the Federation made a number of inspections of Chaplin Reserve in late October 2010.

The club was presented with a list of 25 items that needed to be rectified by February 2011.

Committee members, with the help of some supporters spent many Sunday mornings at the ground, cutting over grown grass from every embankment, cleaning tons debris accumulated in the 4 changing rooms, the referee's room and also from around the ground, removed barbwire and many dangerous overhead hanging trees in car parking areas, cleaned and made every toilet fit for use, refitted new shower and toilet fittings, changed broken windows and lots of painting, welding, carpentry, and re-surface the main pitch and training facilities. The transformation of Chaplin Reserve was complete and all the hard work was rewarded with official news the ground passed fit for use in 2011, after the final inspection was done on Thursday 24 February.

AS ROMA SCOUTS IN SYDNEY

Genova International School of Soccer Presents A FREE Clinic with Soccer Giant AS Roma at Bankstown, Sydney on Saturday, 5th March 2011.

Following the success of last year's clinic where Totti's own youth coach put himself at the disposal of young Sydney soccer players, the AS Roma crew were keen to return and that's just what they will be doing on Saturday 4th March, inviting young players in Sydney to strut their stuff for two Italian AS Roma Coaches and Director of Genova International School of Soccer, Morris Pagniello, who also scouts talent for AS Roma and various other European & Asian Clubs. Hosted by Pagniello, the clinic will run from 130pm to 330pm for ages 14 - 18 year olds at Park-Milperra reserve, corner of Ashford Ave & Bullecourt Ave, Milperra. To book a place call 1300 793 505.



Victory and SFC Embark On Asia

By David Manuca

MELBOURNE Victory and Sydney FC's respective Asian Champions League campaigns begin this week with Melbourne facing Gamba Osaka in Japan on Tuesday night, while the Sky Blues host Korea's Suwon Samsung Bluewings at the Sydney Football Stadium on Wednesday.

As minor-premiers of last season, Sydney FC qualified for just its second Asian Champions League campaign after competing in the 2006 Champions League. As runner-ups in the Grand Final, Melbourne Victory qualified for what will be its third Asian Champions League campaign in just four years.

Neither though have made it out of their groups, with Melbourne and Sydney both finishing second in their group in their first Champions League campaigns, and ironically both behind the eventual winners of the competition.

Both sides have made a number of signings as well to boost their squads for the ACL. Melbourne Victory have signed goalkeeper Tando Velaphi and midfielder Isaka Cernak from Perth Glory and North Queensland Fury respectively. Sydney FC also added two players, signing both David Williams from the Fury and Andy Durante from Wellington Phoenix on loan.

Ricardinho and Mate Dugandzic are two players not on the list for the Victory, with the Brazilian missing out thanks to the AFC's 3+1 rule for the ACL whilst Mate Dugandzic refused

to sign a short-term deal with the Victory which would have taken him to the end of the Champions League group stage.

Sydney FC were also forced to drop Finnish striker Juho Makela and Sung-Hwan Byun due to the 3+1 rule, with Sydney manager Vitezslav Lavicka opting to take Bruno Cazarine, Terry McFlynn, Stephen Keller and Hiro Moriyasu instead.

Sydney have also included six youth players in their squad, including Joel Chianese who scored the winning goal last Wednesday against Sydney United in their final hit-out before they take on Suwon.

After both sides had very unsuccessful 2010/11 A-League seasons with Sydney missing out on the finals and Melbourne being eliminated in the first elimination final by the Gold Coast, it gives them both the incentive to perform well in the Champions League.

The Sky Blues will be going into their clash with Korean side Suwon on Wednesday full of confidence and with the ambition to do the city of Sydney proud. Sydney are un-beaten in 2011 and are carrying some great form going into the competition.

"We are very confident heading into the Champions League. We have played well in 2011 in the A-League, we have good players here and of course we added some more players in both attack and defence," Sydney FC coach Vitezslav Lavicka said.

"I feel we have good balance in the squad. We have many attacking options and strikers that play in different ways. We have



experience through all positions and of course youth and speed with our young players."

"We have added six of our Youth League players to the squad also. This will give them important experience both personally and for the club."

"We will represent Sydney FC fans, the club, ourselves and the city and try to do everyone proud."

Sydney's opponents, Suwon, have made a number of new signings as well with coach Yoon Sung-hyo stating 60% of their starting line-up will be new players. Suwon made it to the quarter finals in last years competition, bowing out 4-3 on aggregate to eventual champions Seongnam Ilwha.

Melbourne Victory kick-off their Asian Champions League campaign against Japanese powerhouse club Gamba Osaka at the Expo 70 Stadium in Osaka on Tuesday night. These two clubs faced each-other

in the 2008 Champions League competition, with Gamba defeating Melbourne 4-3 at Etihad Stadium (then known as the Telstra Dome) in what was one of the most entertaining games the Victory has ever competed in.

In Japan it was the same story as Osaka proved to good for Melbourne once again, defeating them 2-0 in a well-deserved victory which ended Melbourne's hopes of advancing to the next round. Melbourne finished second in their group behind Osaka who were later crowned champions of the competition, after beating none other than Adelaide United in the final.

Melbourne haven't been in the best of form in recent games after having lost their past two matches but they will be looking to take the game to Osaka even without two important players.

Victory's Carlos Hernandez and Grant Brebner, who are both struggling with injuries, will not make the trip to Japan.

VICTORY

Match Day 1 Tuesday, March 1
Gamba Osaka (Japan) v Victory
Expo 70 Stadium, Osaka

Match Day 2 Wednesday, March 2
Victory v Jeju United (Korea)
Docklands

Match Day 3 Tuesday, April 5
Tianjin Teda (China) v Victory
Tianjin Teda Football Stadium

Match Day 4 Wednesday, April 20
Victory v Tianjin Teda (China)
Docklands

Match Day 5 Wednesday, May 4
Victory v Gamba Osaka (Japan)
Docklands

Match Day 6 Wednesday, May 11
Jeju United (Korea) v Victory
Jeju World Cup Stadium, Jeju

MELBOURNE VICTORY

Michael Petkovic (GK), Kevin Muscat, Petar Franjic, Surat Sukha, Leigh Broxham, Matthew Kemp, Grant Brebner, Archie Thompson, Marvin Angulo, Rodrigo Vargas, Diogo Ferreira, Billy Celeste, Tom Podeljak, Carlos Hernandez, Matthew Foschini, Danny Allsopp, Isaka Cernak, Sebastian Mattei (GK), Robbie Kruse, Adrian Leijer (c), Luke Pilkington, Luke O'Dea, Nick Ansell, James Jeggo, Tando Velaphi (GK)

"Brebs is not looking good. In his effort to get ready for last week's game he's restrained his calf slightly, so he's not looking good," Victory coach Ernie Merrick said.

"Carlos is struggling - he's suffered so many injuries and he's struggled to train."

"Coming on 15 minutes here and 20 minutes there, he's really struggling to survive."

"It would be a huge risk to take him and expect him to do a job in midfield."

SYDNEY FC

MD 1 Wednesday 2 March 8pm
Suwon Samsung Bluewings (Korea)
Sydney Football Stadium

MD 2 Wednesday 16 March 7pm
Kashima Antlers (Japan)
Kashima Soccer Stadium

MD 3 Wednesday 6 April 8pm
Shanghai Shenhua (China)
Sydney Football Stadium

MD 4 Tuesday 19 April 8pm
Shanghai Shenhua (China)
Hongkou Stadium

MD 5 Tuesday 3 May 7:30pm
Suwon Samsung Bluewings (Korea)
Suwon World Cup Stadium

MD 6 Tuesday 10 May 8pm Kashima
Antlers (Japan)
Sydney Football Stadium

SYDNEY FC

Liam Reddy, Sebastian Ryall, Stephan Keller, Hirofumi Moriyasu, Brendan Gan, Stuart Musialik, Bruno Cazarine, Nick Carle, David Williams, Shannon Cole, Terry McFlynn, Kofi Danning, Mark Bridge, Ivan Necesnik, Scott Jamieson, Matthew Jurman, Dimitri Petratos, Joel Chianese, Jared Lum, Blake Powell, Nathan Sherlock, Rhyan Grant, Dylan Mitchell, Luke Austin, Andrew Durante

But Melbourne will welcome back defender Kevin Muscat in what has been dubbed his 'farewell tour'. Petar Franjic will most likely make way for Kevin Muscat and with Brebner and Hernandez both un-available it will open up an opportunity for new signing Isaka Cernak to get a start.

Archie Thompson has also fully recovered from injury and is predicted to start along side Robbie Kruse and Danny Allsopp up-front.

Arsenal triumph, as United and Madrid stall

By Matthew Galea

LAST week saw the completion of all UEFA Champions League first legs in the round of sixteen.

With the exception of Chelsea, no team failed to land any fatal blows, and most sides will head into the second leg fixtures with a real chance of moving onto the quarter final stages.

Over the eight games played over the last two weeks, a total of sixteen goals were scored with only one goalless game, between Marseille and Manchester United.

There is everything to play for as the sixteen sides commence their European campaigns in two weeks time.

The tie of the round was undoubtedly contested between Arsenal and Barcelona at the Emirates stadium.

Barcelona demonstrated their superior prowess on the ball, finishing the game with a rather astonishing 66% of possession. Barcelona will feel aggrieved, rightly, that Messi's completely valid goal in the first half was ruled offside, a goal that would have put the Catalan giants 2-0 up, however credit must go to the Gunners for taking their chances when they presented themselves.

Robin Van Persie showed in-

credible skill and poise to take advantage of an error of judgment on Victor Valdez, finding a gap at the near post, before Arshavin scored the winner with a glorious finish.

A thrilling contest between two sides determined to play football the right way, there is no doubt who the superior team technically is, but Arsenal have seemingly found a cutting edge that allows them to win games they don't necessarily dominate, a vital aspect if you want to make any ground in Europe.

European giants Manchester United and Real Madrid both struggled in France. Manchester United successfully staved off the Marseille threat, restricting them to very few chances.

Chris Smalling continued to demonstrate his immense potential and talent, making a number of crucial tackles and interceptions, whilst Vidic proved his usual dependant self. It was in the middle of the park and in the final third that United struggled. Nani and Rooney worked hard but couldn't find the opening, whilst Berbatov showed some deft touches, but it wasn't to be.

Madrid too struggled, and thought they had nicked the win when Benzema came on to haunt his former clubs, scoring with his first touch. It proved

not enough however, with Lyon striker Gomis, who had been at his profligate best throughout the game, finally took his chance to level the scores.

Despite the late setback, Madrid's away goal ensures they remain strong favorites to progress.

Chelsea and Tottenham on the other hand secured very positive results with wins away from home. Chelsea has effectively sealed their progression into the quarter finals after easily dispatching of Copenhagen 2-0.

Anelka's brace will put him at the forefront of Carlo Ancelotti's attacking plans as he continues to toil to find the best combination up front after the record breaking signing of Fernando Torres, who once again spurned a number of good chances.

Tottenham on the other hand could only manage one goal but against a very poor AC Milan side it could have been much more.

An ugly spat between Genarro Gattuso and Joe Jordan has ensured that the combative Italian midfielder will take no part in the second leg, a loss that will severely hurt AC Milan's already slim chances. Tottenham were well worth their win, and will look to finish the Italian giants off next week.



Mario Gomez lands the knock-out punch for Bayern against Inter.

In a rematch of last season's final, Munich stole a 1-0 win over Inter Milan at the San Siro to give the Bavarian side a huge chance of knocking out the champions in the round of sixteen, an indication of how far Inter have fallen since the departure of Jose Mourinho.

The match itself was very even, and it was perhaps a tad harsh on Inter to fall to Mario Gomez's late goal. It could be the telling blow in this tie, and Inter Milan will have to improve considerably to overcome this deficit against a strong looking Bayern outfit.

Ties also remain in the balance between Schalke and Valencia, as well as Roma and Shakhtar Donetsk. Shakhtar are in a dominant position, but if the first leg

was indicator, the return leg could be a very open game and with a rejuvenated Roma side itching to overturn the one goal deficit, Shakhtar's progression may not be as safe as they would like to think.

With three away goals, the impetus is certainly on Roma but they are a side who has underperformed all season and with club legend Vincenzo Montella now at the helm, they could manage a big result.

Valencia will be unhappy to be heading to Germany having conceded a record breaking Raul away goal, however they were by far the better team on the night, and will surely qualify should they start to finish the impressive amount of chances they create. Valencia have struggled away

Round of 16

1st leg results : 15-23 February

AC Milan	0-1 Tottenham Hotspur
Valencia CF	1-1 Schalke 04
AS Roma	2-3 Shakhtar Donetsk
Arsenal FC	2-1 Barcelona
København	0-2 Chelsea
Lyonnais	1-1 Real Madrid
Marseille	0-0 Manchester United
Inter Milano	0-1 Bayern München

2nd legs to be played
8-16 March

from home this season, and despite Schalke's troubles domestically this season, this game will not be easy for either side.

With no Champions League action next week, the round of sixteen will recommence the following week, with four return legs; Barcelona vs. Arsenal, Schalke vs. Valencia, Tottenham vs. AC Milan and Shakhtar Donetsk vs. Roma, with the remaining ties not to be played until the week after that.

With plenty of ties still in the balance, all sixteen sides will need to be fully prepared and ready to take whatever chances come their way.

Don't be surprised to see some of Europe's finest dumped out so early in the competition.

Krncevic's Crunchlines

Australian soccer legend, Eddie Krnceanic represented the Socceroos 35 times and scored 17 goals. He played professionally in Europe for Dinamo Zagreb (Croatia), MSV Duisberg (Germany), Mulhouse (France) and Anderlecht, FC Liege, Aalst and Charleroi in Belgium.



With Eddie Krnceanic

GREETINGS football fans and welcome to the first dose of Krnceanic's Crunchlines for season 2011.

I hope you all had an enjoyable summer and like everyone else, I'm glad that the new season has finally arrived and football is back at the top of the agenda.

As most of you are aware I was appointed coach of South Melbourne FC towards the end of last year, and return to the helm after last holding the po-

sition back in the NSL days of 2000/01.

I've wasted no time in throwing myself into the role, and am determined to bring the glory days back to one of Australia's most respected and successful clubs.

We've had a strong pre-season, putting the players through their paces in preparation for one of the strongest VPL competitions seen in years.

No doubt it promises to be an exciting season ahead, and I look forward to the challenges

that await.

We managed to win the Thrifty Cup on a visit to Tasmania, and we also won the Hellenic Cup.

But, as we all know the serious business now begins, and after the opening two rounds of the VPL I'm satisfied with the way the squad is travelling.

We had a tough test against Green Gully last week and managed to draw 1-1, and on Friday night we secured our first three points of the season after beating Springvale White Eagles 6-4 in an entertaining

battle.

Whilst I'm sure the fans would have enjoyed the goal-fest, from a coach's perspective I wasn't happy to succeed four goals.

Nevertheless, it is something we'll have to work on in order to try and avoid a repeat performance.

With the NTC game on Wednesday night at Port Melbourne, and then a tough match awaits against Bentleigh Greens on Sunday, the games are coming in thick and fast so we have to be ready and be on top of our game. There is no time to waste.

As I said earlier, this year's competition promises to be a very even one, so we need to make a strong start which will put us in good stead for the season ahead.

We have to be professional in our approach and try to re-cre-

ate that winning mentality that was synonymous with South Melbourne FC for the best part of its history.

MIRABELLA CUP

There has been a lot of activity behind the scenes during the off-season, and the announcement of the Mirabella Cup is a fantastic initiative for all concerned.

The re-introduction of a knock-out style cup tournament open to all clubs of the Victorian football family is long overdue and I'm sure it will be a huge success.

The fact of the matter, is that trophies like the Mirabella Cup can create great incentives for clubs to participate in. Not only does it present further games and opportunities for the players to aspire towards, but it also fills a vacuum in the football calendar for clubs as well.

I know that here at South Melbourne FC we are also looking forward to once again participating in the Singapore Cup later this year, and whilst we can safely assume that the door to the A-league may well be a closed case for now, it won't stop us thinking outside the box for what is paramount for the club's existence.

Last season's participation in the Singapore Cup gave us fantastic exposure in Asia, and the opportunity to build relationships and ties that would have been unheard of a few years ago when the landscape of Australian football was re-structured.

With Bob Jane Stadium undergoing a major renovation, the future actually seems quite bright for a change, especially after the foremost thought for an extended period of time was essentially just one of survival.



Gas Bagging Dept.

BOO'S WORLD

With Mark Boric



I'VE received word from the FFV that the reason Katsa didn't get a Media Pass was that you don't need one to access the cafes in Eaton Mall in Oakleigh, which is where much of the information for his column is gleaned from apparently. Which is probably half true but still no reason to deny the man the same accreditation of other journalists simply because he remains critical of the FFV regime.

Tony Dunkerly has announced he won't be standing at the upcoming FFV elections. Must have seen the writing on the wall with Mubarak, Gaddafi and whoever the Algerian bloke is all coming under the pump in recent times.

Some crazy results in the AVPL this week, with defending going out of the window at White Eagles Stadium and George Andrews Reserve. 4-6, 5-2 it was almost a tennis score. Probably not any defenders from those sides going to follow the Sash Ognenovski path from the VPL to Asian domination and then Socceroo glory.

Wolves, Manchester United and Aston Villa all hit four on Saturday as the goal spree continued. You wonder if it would



Mark Schwarzer briefly leaves his Zimmer frame to pull off a save for the Socceroos in a 2030 World Cup qualifying match

be like this all the time if referee's assistants actually played inline with the last defender as onside, but that hardly ever happens.

Brisbane Roar and Central Coast Mariners put on a great show on Saturday night, in what appeared to have been likely to be a dead rubber going into the match. Hopefully Brisbane will go on to win the Grand Final, it is always preferable to see the team which finishes on top of the ladder take all the honours. Once again though, it was a shame that Andy Harper was commentating. Someone has to

do something about him.

Thankfully Mitch Langerak avoided a Michael Theoklitos-style European debut, doing well as Borussia Dortmund beat Bayern Munich 3-1. It means that just maybe Mark Schwarzer may not have to play on for the Socceroos until he is 50 years of age.

ANDY "Harps" Harper was in his usual fine form in his call of the Brisbane Roar V Central Coast Mariners where his adjectives of "Salivating", "Pulsating", "Riveting", and "High Crescendo" could be confused with a Club's Powerbrokers Saturday Night activities.

However, it described perfectly the above match where Goal a Game Arnie's Mariners came within a Bees Private Parts to turning around a two goal deficit to reach the Grand Finale. However, Ange Postecoglou's boys had other ideas and quickly killed off the above dream.

They now await the winner of the Preliminary Final between Adelaide and the Central Coast, which will be played at what was once temporarily, Suncorp Swimming pools.

Speaking of Postecoglou, there was an interesting article on the World Game Website about his rise, then Craig Foster assisted fall.

It appears that Fossies infamous 2006 interview with Postecoglou did Ange no favours with his Career, as Club Powerbrokers when assessing his credentials, somehow reverted to the Kylie Minogue hit, "I Just Can't Get You Out

Of My Head", with Fossie's scathing criticisms of Postecoglou's performance as a Coach with the national "Young Tackers" Team influencing their views as a Coach. However, Postecoglou now has the Runs on the Board and will be in demand when his Roar Contract expires.

Ernie?

Over to the Local scene we go where the meaning of the term, "It's not over till the Fat Lady Sings" rang true at the White Eagles V South Melbourne Match on Friday Night.

The White Eagles were cruising at Half time, being two Goals to the good, until South stepped up a few gears and whacked Six past them, to secure a 6-4 Happy End, a score which more resembles one that you would find at a Volleyball Match.

Club Powerbrokers beware of Seventeen Year Old Females carrying Gifts, this is a lesson that a certain AFL identity found out the hard way during the week, seems that certain alleged Happy Ends has landed this Lad into some Hot Water, I am certain however that the Lads that run our Fine Game are smarter than that.

Or maybe, they just don't get it.

To the tropics we go, where in Sunny Townsville a certain A-League Side is about as safe to survive the B Buckley Razor gang as I am of wearing W N Field replacement patches. Seems that there is a drive now to muster up local investors, with each of these kicking in \$ Large to become part owners of the Club.

My view of the above is simple, far North Queensland is better suited to Tourist activities; unfortunately the Game has not, and will not take of up there.

Now for some Word Associations:

1 Grand Flat – Average Weekly wage of a VPL Pop Star

1.2 Grand Flat – Average Weekly Wage for Imported Backpacker Pop Star

2 Grand Flat – Average Wage of an Ex A-League Pop Star now playing in the VPL

Youth Policy – Playing one Kid in a senior team, with the remaining 10 Players being 30 Years Old

Until Next Week

This is Katsa, just as you have known him.

THE KATSA

With George Katsamboukas



**5-A-SIDE
INDOOR
SOCCER**

LOCATIONS INCLUDE:

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MACKENZIE AT LARGE

With Craig MacKenzie

HAD TONY Dunkerley won a second term as president of Football Federation Victoria he would have made the greatest electoral comeback in the game's history.

His decision not to contest next month's election was recently announced on the FFV website but board members and zone representatives told me before Christmas that his was a lost cause.

I had heard such talk before but this time things seemed different with the troops being rallied in what threatened to become open rebellion.

There was talk of an extraordinary general meeting at which votes of no confidence were to be moved against Dunkerley, four board members and CEO Mark Rendell. The cause of such consternation centred upon two of three discussion papers circulated to members, specifically a proposal about a company restructure and a director

succession planning proposal which included the formation of a nominations committee. The disgruntled stakeholders believed that Dunkerley and four board members promoted the adoption of the proposals and that Rendell proposed and drafted them.

The proposal to change the federation's company structure from an incorporated association to a company limited by guarantee was not the main stimulus for stakeholder unrest.

That mantle fell upon the proposal for a nominations committee which would oversee nominations for board positions and decide which nominees could run for office. GW understands that stakeholders also discovered that despite the results of their vote Dunkerley made it clear that the board was empowered to decide whether or not to adopt the proposals.

So why ask stakeholders to vote? And what was the point of the forum?

Dunkerley faced monumental task



Mubarak Gadaffi, and now Tony Dunkerley. February seemed to spell the end for presidents around the world.

From one perspective the vote could be seen as a mini election, a precursor to next month's director elections, a test of the electoral waters.

If that was the case then the feedback was overwhelming. The Dunkerley camp had backed a loser.

Not so board member Nick

Monteleone who sent a letter to zone representatives and standing committee chairpersons bluntly outlining his opposition to the proposals. Monteleone's letter acknowledged that the proposal for a nominations committee had "deeply divided the board" and claimed that the "proposal of a Nominations Committee is disrespectful to you as a member."

Monteleone stated his stance in unequivocal terms: "This proposal is not in keeping with the values of being an open, honest, transparent and accountable organization. "I can only conclude that this is not about board succession. It is about setting up a nomination committee of faceless people. It is about reducing members' rights. It is about controlling the outcome of the next and future elections." And his words struck a chord with the electorate. Voting was conducted by email and in December the results became known. We have been told that

the nominations committee proposal was scuppered by 19 votes to two.

That resounding result may well have ended Dunkerley's chances of re-election and it may even have played a significant part in the decision of Jamie Parsons and Mark Trajelevski not to seek re-election to the board.

The matter appeared resolved on 10 December when Dunkerley wrote to members the day after an FFV board meeting.

His letter told members that "no proposed changes to the constitution regarding transitioning to a company will be put at this year's (sic) AGM." More importantly from the stakeholder's perspective the letter stated that "a motion was passed that the FFV board will not be implementing a nominations committee for the impending board elections."

Irvine debuts for Hoops

JACKSON Irvine made his Celtic under-19s debut last week coming on as a sub in a Scottish Cup quarter final then winning a starting spot in a league game a few days later.

The former Frankston Pines star came on as a central midfielder in the Hoops' 4-0 cup stroll against Stenhousemuir. His league debut saw him start in his preferred central midfield role in what was a fiery encounter against St Johnstone at Tulloch Park in Perth.

Liam Caddis gave Saints the lead but Celtic was reduced to 10 men before the break when Stephen O'Donnell saw red.

His dismissal saw Irvine switch to right back and things looked grim for the visitors when Tony Watt was dismissed with eight minutes to go but James Keatings notched his 15th goal of the season in the final minute to earn a point for the nine men.

The result leaves Irvine's side three points behind league leaders Rangers with a game in hand and a far superior goal difference.

The Scottish Cup semi-finals draw sees Celtic meet Livingston at Celtic Park on Sunday 27 March and if the feedback

Irvine has received from the coaching staff is anything to go by he has a fair chance of featuring in that contest.

"I was told I did well after the league game which was good because it was a very hard game for us," said the 17-year-old.

"The club itself is such a wonderful club to be a part of. It's amazing getting to train with world class players and coaches every day and I feel myself improving as a player almost daily."

"Hopefully after two years I can earn myself a pro contract but I understand how difficult a task that is."

His parents are delighted



Jackson Irvine in action for Celtic's under-19s. A league and cup double is on the horizon.

too. Father Steve and mother Danielle fly out from Melbourne shortly for a month-long visit.

They'll have plenty of football on the agenda as the teenage Hoops have a massive backlog of games and it's almost cer-

tain they'll be watching their son in action regularly during their stay.

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CALCIO FEMMINILE
VERONA BARDOLINO

New Face at The Village

Francis Fields: Firstly Adrian, welcome back to Melbourne.

Adrian Caceres: Thank you very much.

FF: How is everything going at Heidelberg United so far?

AD: It's going really well thanks. We've had a pretty good pre-season and managed to make it to the final of the Hellenic Cup, just losing 2-1 to South Melbourne, but overall it was a very good game that finished off a solid pre-season preparation.

Since then, we had our first game of the season against Richmond Eagles last week, and we managed to grab the three points - so that was very pleasing and we're off to a winning start.

FF: What are your first impressions of the Victorian Premier League?

AC: To be fair, I already knew a fair bit about the VPL and what it's about because when I was with Melbourne Victory we played a lot of games against VPL clubs. It's a pretty strong league in its own right and I was impressed by the standard and quality of players. Obviously now I'm getting a first hand experience, but the football culture is strong and the passion is there, just like so many clubs and leagues all over the world.

FF: You were substituted on your debut for Heidelberg United last week, was that a tactical move by the coach, or were you injured?

AC: Unfortunately for me I copped a knock at the Friday training session before the game, which meant I came into the game carrying an injury. I tried to play with the injury but it just got worse and worse, so I basically had to come off. I've had some physio treatment since and it appears I've got a slight calf strain, so it looks like I'll probably be out of action for a couple of weeks.

So I guess it wasn't the best of starts on a personal note, but it was still pretty good that the team got the three points on the opening day of the season.

FF: You won an NSL title with Perth Glory and an A-League Championship with Melbourne Victory, what are the chances you might be able to add a VPL title to the collection with Heidelberg United this year?

AC: Well that's definitely the plan! I want to be successful with any club that I'm at, so I'd be lying if I said we don't won't to win the championship at Heidelberg. I'm not saying that we will do that, but that's definitely our aim. We've got our goals set for the season and we're working hard trying to do the right things on the pitch, but yeah for sure, on a personal note it would be nice to add some more silverware to go with the others.

FF: You obviously spent some time overseas in the early stages of your career, how was the experience for you?

AC: It was very good for me and I learnt quite a lot. I spent two years at Southampton and I was also on loan to a few other clubs, but overall the experience taught me a lot about being a professional footballer and what it takes to play at a high level. When I was younger I even spent some time in Argentina as well, and I try and combine all my experiences into the way I play today.

FF: How soon would you suggest to youngsters to give it a crack overseas?

AC: When I left to go overseas the set up here in Australia wasn't like it is now. I think if you're playing regular football here, especially at an A-League level, then I think you're better off to learn your trade here at the beginning before you make the leap overseas. With all the exposure these days if you're good enough then you'll be spotted and you'll probably end up playing overseas anyway.

FF: What's the football future hold for Adrian Caceres?

AC: I think I'm still young enough and good enough to keep playing at a top level. I'm just working hard to get noticed again and help Heidelberg achieve their goals. On a personal note, like any other player I'd like to have another crack at the A-League, but if that doesn't happen then so be it. I'm just here to play my hardest and play my best. So whatever the future holds, we'll soon find out.

FF: And for Heidelberg United?

AC: The club's ambitious and the club wants to win competitions. They want to win games and that's what I want, that's what I'm about and that's what I'm here for. I just want to win every game that I'm playing. I'm here to help the club realise its ambitions and I'm sure the club's recruited well for this years campaign. They've got good players already here so it's a good combination and I'm just looking forward to the challenge.

FF: You mentioned about your wife, you're married and you've started up a family.

We've got a little baby girl, Mia Rhianna Caceres.

FF: Congratulations.

Thank you very much, she's ten months old and yeah, best change in my life, it's the best thing that's ever happened to me.

FF: And if you can recall, what's been the best goal you've scored in your career?

AC: I don't know if I could pick the best goal (off the top of my head), but definitely the most important, for me personally, was with Melbourne Victory against Perth Glory - that was definitely a memorable goal.

Another memorable goal for me was scoring my first goal in the A-League for Perth Glory against Melbourne Victory, so I've got a few memorable goals.

FF: All the very best for 2011. I'm sure the readers of GW and fans of Heidelberg United will be looking forward to an exciting season.

AC: Definitely. What's quite important for me is the sequence of events from last year. I was then with Wellington Phoenix when I found myself without a club and there was one person who was willing to help me to get here, where I am now, and that is Jimmy Marinoss.

I think without Jimmy I wouldn't be here. He's been the most important person so far to get me back on track with my career, and with my plans and with my dreams.

I am grateful to have him as an agent, and as a friend.



New man about town: Adrian Caceres in action on his VPL debut for Heidelberg United against Richmond Eagles last week.

Photo: JOHN PUNSHON

Summer Cup heads for Semis

By Walter Pless

TASMANIA

SOUTH Hobart will meet New Town Eagles and Tilford Zebras will take on Olympia Warriors in next Wednesday's Southern Tasmanian Summer Cup semi-finals at KGV Park.

South Hobart and Olympia will also meet each other in the semi-finals of the Northern Tasmanian Steve Hudson Cup pre-season competition.

South Hobart trounced Glenorchy Knights 10-0 at South Hobart on Saturday to finish top of Group B with three wins from their three games.

It was a record win for South Hobart over Glenorchy Knights, the previous highest score having been a 10-1 win in 1960. The Knights' record defeat was a 12-0 loss to Olympia in 1966.

New Town Eagles easily overcame Metro 5-0 at North Chigwell to finish top in Group D, while Olympia Warriors downed Kingborough Lions United 3-0 at Olinda Grove to earn first place in Group C.

Tilford Zebras finished first in Group A after overcoming Beachside 2-0 at Olinda Grove.

In other matches, Clarence United defeated Nelson Eastern Suburbs 6-1 at North Chigwell in a Group B match, while Taroona won 2-1 against University in a Group A tussle at Olinda Grove.

In group C, Hobart United registered their first win of the tournament with a 9-0 annihilation of DOSA at Olinda Grove.

South Hobart hit the front against Glenorchy Knights after just 29 seconds and led 4-0 at the interval through two goals apiece by Jonathan Lo and Shae Hickey.

It was 5-0 in the 72nd minute when Andy Brennan gained possession wide on the right after an



Olympia's Warren Wadawu (left) is tackled by Kingborough's Isaac Lucas.

Photo: WALTER PLESS

error by Knights keeper Ben Peter and squared the ball for Kostas Kanaikaris to smash past two defenders who had tried to cover for their goalkeeper.

An own-goal by Anthony Grundy in the 73rd minute made it 6-0, while Cameron Williams added the seventh in the 77th minute.

Tom Roach's firm cross from the right was headed home by Williams for South Hobart's eighth, while Williams scored from a penalty in the 84th-minute after Peter's foul on Greg Downes to make it 9-0.

Luke Huigslot put Brennan in on goal two minutes from the end and the youngster nut-megged Peter to complete the 10-goal demolition of the Knights.

Juma Barabara put Eagles ahead against Metro in the 36th min-

ute after Adam McKeown's pass, while 4 minutes after the break, Esteban Gonzalez made it 2-0 with a low drive inside the far post from the right.

Alex Leszczynski added Eagles' third in the 52nd minute, while Jacob Clamp made it 4-0 four minutes later.

Jamie Vernon swept home the fifth from beyond the far post after a cross from the right in the first minute of stoppage time.

Warren Wadawu gave Olympia Warriors an opening-minute lead against a disappointing Kingborough Lions United outfit.

A header from 20 metres by Andrew Reason in the 40th minute made it 2-0 at the interval.

Wadawu capped a fine performance with his second goal, and

his side's third, in the final minute when he raced down the left and lifted the ball expertly over the advancing keeper, Adam Coleman.

Strikes by Jonathon Ladic in the first half, and Luke Cripps in the second, gave Zebras their 2-0 win over a Beachside outfit that played with 10 men for the last hour after Adam McGuire was sent off for a bad tackle.

A header by Ben Schaap after 12 minutes gave Taroona the lead against University, while Jon Darby netted Taroona's second in the 20th minute.

Mansour Alalawi scored University's consolation goal in the 55th minute.

Bill Hanley netted for Nelson in their 6-1 loss to Clarence United.

Southern Cross Shocks Strikers

By Jarrod Ellis

QUEENSLAND

THE inaugural Clem Jones Shield drew to a close on Friday night, Southern Cross United pulling off a major shock to defeat Brisbane Strikers 1-0.

The final had been scheduled to feature Brisbane and Sunshine Coast Fire but the reigning QSL Champions sensationally withdrew from the game only hours from kickoff, citing an inability to field a full side.

Southern Cross were set to face Gold Coast United in the third place playoff but were bumped up into the final, in the end a fortuitous result for the club.

The Strikers arguably had the better of the opening of the match bossing the midfield without being able to carve open a genuine scoring opportunity.

But while Southern Cross were virtually denied access to the Strikers' defensive third of the field during this time, they almost drew first blood thanks to a thunderous shot from thirty-five yards out by former Brisbane Striker Callum Hare.

The Strikers replied in the twenty-fourth minute when Michael Searle played a sliderule pass that found Michael Angus in United's penalty area. However, the eventual shooting angle was too tight and Angus' shot flew into the side netting.

Five minutes later Southern Cross were gifted what would turn out to be the decisive goal when the Strikers gave the ball away in their own half.

Searle found himself dispossessed by a sliding tackle and as the ball rolled loose, United's Reggie Davani swooped and unleashed a vicious first-time shot that gave Striker's keeper Brendan White no chance.

Davani went close again a few minutes later with a left-footed drive after good lead-up work by former Sydney United marksman Cummins Menapi, before the Strikers were left rueing their failure to put away a gilt-edged opportunity.

A long ball launched from inside the Strikers' own half found United failing to deal with it, a weak de-

fensive header falling to Angus inside United's area with only Stein to beat. But Angus could only guide his shot straight into the waiting arms of Stein, who was well off his line.

Halftime came and went with little fanfare, both sides struggling to create genuine chances.

The Strikers began the second stanza in promising fashion, Searle sending in a low cross that found Jonti Richter who applied an accurate first-time shot with the inside of his right foot, but United's substitute goalkeeper reacted brilliantly to palm it away from goal as he got down smartly to his left.

From there both sides had half chances from set pieces but aside from that the match fizzled into a non-event, neither team able to demonstrate sufficient cutting edge to create a goal.

The final whistle sounded on a 1-0 win for Southern Cross United, the new QSL entrants announcing their arrival in the competition with a preseason win that should send a warning to their opponents around the league that they will be a force to be reckoned with.

For the Strikers it was another disappointing result in a big game but coach David Large insisted that plenty of positives had emerged from what he had seen from his team during the four weeks of the Clem Jones Shield.

"Certainly our fitness, which had been a concern to me – I thought we actually outran them in the end," Large said.

"I'll take that away and realise that maybe I was a bit too judgmental on them. I thought we did quite well fitness-wise."

"But the really good thing is that we certainly got to get a good taste of some of the young kids that we've acquired this year and I thought that every one of them has applied themselves well and shown that they're probably only twelve months away from being in the big time."

So I'm going to take that away and say the tournament was great for me because it showed us the potential that we have".

Carlsberg Cup final eight decided

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

ROUND 5 of the Carlsberg Cup marked the final round of qualification for the preseason competition which saw eight teams move onto the quarter finals. The criteria to be met was to finish top of your group and then the next best three performers would proceed through to the next stage.

Group One saw David Terminello's MetroStars win all five of their matches easily with Brenton Hibern's Adelaide Galaxy being one of the three best performers in the competition, challenging for top position and finishing on a 10-0 victory over State League side Gawler. Their only flaw was a loss in Round 1 which they succumbed to at the hands of the group leaders MetroStars.

On Friday night punters were treated to a double header at Marden Sports Complex with a Group Two thriller between Ross Aloisi's West Adelaide State League team and the undefeated Adrian Santrac's White City Woodville Premier League team. It was a must win game for White City having West Adelaide and Western Strikers both only one point behind them. Credit to the Blue and Whites who took it up to City after being 1-0 down at half time to stage a well fought out victory taking their opposition to a 3-2 win, with ex Adelaide United midfielder Aaron Westervelt instrumental in the setting up of and scoring a goal himself, along with teammates Sarris and Walker giving them top



Cumberland's tall timber Alor Bulabek gets over the top of Knights striker Russell Clayton all under the watchful eye of player/coach Neil Young Photo: ADAM BUTLER

position of the Group. The Western Strikers 5-0 win against WD Toros saw them leapfrog White City but with not enough goals being scored in total, just missed out on finals qualification.

Group Three trendsetters have been John Kosmina's Super League club Raiders who dominated their group and seemed to do with ease with some great football being played by youngsters over the five weeks. Their 3-1 win against State League side NAB low scoring that it was, still ensured they advanced

through to the finals stage. Raiders along with South Adelaide Panthers and MetroStars were the only sides that went through the initial stage of the competition undefeated. Damian Mori's Adelaide City's 3-0 win against Enfield City Falcons saw them come out as one of the best three performers, winning four out of the five matches scoring 21 goals and finishing on 12 points with a goal difference of +18.

South Adelaide Panthers were the Group Four performers taking out their group with five wins out of

five games, their final game being played out with a 3-1 win against Croydon Kings on the Sunday morning. With such a lineup of teams such as Adelaide Blue Eagles, Croydon Kings and Adelaide Comets the Panthers have done their club proud by putting in some very good and tough football games to come out the frontrunners.

Finally Group Five has been a three way tie with leaders Campbelltown Red Devils showing the way under the direction of player/coach Jason Trimble. Modbury Jets and the Pirates have been included in the tough tussle sitting neck and neck, the final outcome all dependant on the last game played. The Red Devils round five game against well placed Pirates at Pirate Park proved fruitful with the leaders winning 3-1 and cementing the top of the table position. Meanwhile the Jets had no problems at home against newcomers Sturt Lions, defeating the new entry into the State League with a whopping 8-0 win. Striker Shane Pearce showed he still knows where the back of the net is, bagging himself a tidy four goals, in turn giving his side qualification into the finals as the third best performing team.

The tempo steps up a notch now with the quarter finals to be played next week against the eight successful qualifiers and the South Australian football fans the winners as games hot up with the competition and weather.

State League One sides Queanbeyan City and Weston Creek complete Pool B with both teams

Tough draw for Blue Devils

ACT

BELCONNEN United have been handed what appears to be the harder of the two pools following the draw for the Men's Federation Cup.

Last season's beaten semi-finalists must face fellow Premier League heavyweights Canberra City and Canberra Olympic for a place in the Final with Woden Valley, Tuggeranong United and State League Division One giants White Eagles completing a formidable looking line-up in Pool A.

Over in Pool B there will be a rematch of last season's Final as the holders Canberra FC were grouped with Goulburn Strikers, but it's a completely new look Strikers outfit that will face the treble winners with several of their senior players departing in the summer months leaving new Coach Gerry Doran with a young looking squad.

The crunch match in Pool B already looks likely to be Canberra FC's match with Cooma Tigers which should prove to be an exhilarating contest. Monaro Panthers, who were last season's surprise packets in their return to top flight football in the ACT will certainly be no pushovers though with an off-season recruiting drive seeing them enhance their squad.

Group A: Belconnen United, Canberra City, Canberra Olympic, Woden Valley, White Eagles, Tuggeranong United
Group B: Canberra FC, Monaro Panthers, Cooma Tigers, Queanbeyan City, Goulburn Strikers, Weston Creek

hoping to throw a spanner in the work of their Premier League opponents, much as Weston did to Tuggeranong twelve months ago.

Canberra FC representative Marko Vrkic was pleased with the outcome of the draw.

"I'm very happy, it's a good draw for us," he said. "Cooma look to be our main threat but there are other tough looking matches. You just never know. Pool A looks like being a harder draw though with plenty of good sides in there including the White Eagles."

Meanwhile Tuggeranong United President Anthony Corder was cautious in his appraisal of the Pool A grouping in which his team faces some stiff looking competition.

"There's not a great difference between the groups in my opinion but ours seems slightly the harder," Corder commented. "We have a good a chance as any. We can't complain about our results so far this season, we are happy with how our team has been progressing and look forward to the campaign."

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Seated: Craig Sweeney, Anthony Colosimo, Leo Shin, Rudi Saglam, Ben Surey (Captain), Paul Magdić (Assistant Manager), Ivan Duzel (Manager), Josip Kozić (Vice Captain), Amadu Koroma, Josip Franjić, Shayam Alinejad, Yusuf Yusuf

PHOTO: STEVE STAREK

Chile's Colo-Colo and national team appoint Argentinean coaches

CONTINUING the saga of early-season sackings across the American continent, Colo-Colo have announced the signing of Americo "Toro" (the bull) Gallego at the helm.

He flew in the week over the Andes from Buenos Aires putting pen to paper and admitted to facing a difficult prospect as the Santiago-based club languishes last in 18th position of the standings in the Chilean opening championship - a feat never occurred and the worst possible start to any season in its history.

Gallego was present in the stands as his new players dominated in their mid-week encounter with Palestino with a 3-0 win. His words before and after the match while signing under the dotted sparked some clear warnings as his reminded players and the media that Colo-Colo is a huge club that deserves to be at the top and urged on that on the training pitch, everyone must push themselves to the limit.

Their fierce eternal arch-rival, Universidad de Chile however have lost their leadership atop of the ladder leaving Universidad Catolica top spot after losing mid-week to humble outfit Santiago Morning, from across the capital. Known for causing upsets, the "bohemios", (the bohemians) as they are also known for one of the oldest establishing

clubs in the country downed the Blues (los azules) 2-1 at the National stadium.

Speaking of the National stadium in Santiago, Marcelo Bielsa's successor has been appointed in recent former Boca Juniors coach, Claudio Borghi. The Argentinean tactician stated he feels like another Chilean now with the job and having lived twenty years in the country after having stints in his playing career in Brazil, Italy, Mexico not to mention in his native Argentina.

"It's an honour to be here," said Borghi, 46, during a press conference at the headquarters of the Chilean Football Federation (ANFP). Borghi was symbolically handed the Chile shirt by ANFP president Sergio Jadue and his brief is to oversee a successful Copa America in his homeland later this year and secure qualification for the 2014 World Cup in Brazil.

"To be named coach of the national team after so many years in Chile, practically 20 years... is a source of real pride."

A World Cup-winner as a player with Argentina in 1986, Borghi won four league titles as coach of Chilean giants Colo Colo and also won the 2010 Argentine Clausura championship with his last club, Argentinos Juniors.

The former Colo-Colo manager



Claudio Borghi, then as coach of Boca Juniors, with Melbourne Victory coach Ernie Merrick during their Australian tour last year.

also expressed his desire not to be compared with his predecessor and looks forward to working again with some old faces that have the potential to form a formidable side. His priority also shifts to youth, the discipline in the squad and the warm-hearted affection from Chilean fans.

Preparations for the Copa America that takes place in June in Argentina will be well underway with him including a

friendly away here in Australia against the Socceroos.

Also mid-week, there was plenty of Copa Libertadores action as Independiente of Argentina beat Uruguay's Peñarol 3-0 at home as the sides, champions 12 times between them, renewed the longest standing Libertadores Cup rivalry in Group Eight on Thursday.

It was a good night for Argen-

tine clubs as 1985 champions Argentinos Juniors beat America of Mexico 3-1 in Group Three at the Diego Armando Maradona ground with two goals by Paraguayan striker Santiago Salcedo.

Independiente scored second-half goals by striker Facundo Parra, midfielder Cristian Pellerano and substitute Andres Silvera for their eighth win over Peñarol in 14 meetings since South America's Champions

League equivalent was first played in 1960.

In other results, Atlético Junior of Barranquilla upset Gremio of Brazil at home in Colombia 2-1 after a thrilling comeback. Meanwhile Estudiantes de La Plata by the narrowest of margins to the tough Colombian side Deportes Tolima at their newly opened Ciudad de La Plata stadium, the first indoor stadium in the Latin American continent, ready and purpose-built for the Copa America in June.

Major headlines in Brazil besides a somewhat disappointing week for its teams in the Copa Libertadores are always with Ronaldinho whom has enjoyed immediate short-term success with Flamengo as the Rio de Janeiro giant reaches the final of the Guanabara cup as Flamengo defeated Botafogo 3-1 in a shootout in the semi-final of the Guanabara Cup on Sunday.

Finally, the sad story regarding the progress of Salvador Cabanillas has shared positive light this month as the former Paraguayan international began training with Asuncion-based club Libertad in his native country after his accident this time last year when he was shot with a bullet to his head at a bar in Mexico City and was ordered by doctors never to play football again.

Balkan Wrap with Alex Milic

THE Croatian Prva Liga kicked off once again over the weekend while the Serbian SuperLiga was postponed due to bad weather.

Mario Situm scored the winner for Dinamo as the squeezed past Karlovac. The 'modri' are now seven points ahead of fierce rivals Hajduk who drew with fifth placed Inter Zaprešić at home. It was a terrible day for 'bili' with the fans calling for the resignation of the clubs administration.

NK Split continued its fine run with a win away to Slaven Belupo. Benko scored for the home side but Golubović and Bucan cancelled out the opener to secure three more points for Splits second biggest club.

Hrvatski Dragovoljac secured a valuable win over fellow relegation battles Istra away from home thanks to a Leko goal early on. Hrvatski Dragovoljac remains on bottom with eight points less than Istra.

Sibenik and Zagreb drew 1:1 and both sides remain on the relegation zone. They were both expected to be in the top half at the start of the season but poor form and a lack of continuity has caused the sides to battle to remain in the top flight.

Varteks easily overcame Ri-



Situm scored on debut

jeka in the middle of the table clash 3:0 with goals to Vućinac, Skvorc and Glavica.

Celik defeated Sarajevo 2:1 in the derby match of the Bosnian Premier League while Zeljeznicar easily overcame

Olimpik 3:0. Velez Mostar secured a derby win over fierce rivals Zrinjski with a Velagić goal after an hour. Another derby will take place over the weekend as top of the table Borac Banja Luka take on Siroki Brijeg

Croatia

	P	GD	Pts
1 Dinamo	19	+32	48
2 Hajduk	19	+24	41
3 Cibalia	18	+10	30
4 Split	19	+9	30
5 Inter Zaprešić	19	0	29
6 Varaždin	19	-2	28
7 Karlovac	19	0	26
8 Rijeka	19	-7	25
9 Slaven Belupo	19	-1	24
10 Osijek	19	0	23
11 Zadar	18	-1	23
12 Zagreb	19	-5	22
13 Lokomotiva	19	-10	22
14 Šibenik	19	-4	19
15 Istra 1961	19	-14	18
16 Hrvatski	19	-31	10

Serbia

	P	GD	Pts
1 FK "Borac"	15	13	33
2 FK "Željeznicar"	15	14	28
3 FK "Sarajevo"	15	10	28
4 NK "Široki Brijeg"	15	8	25
5 NK "Travnik"	15	4	22
6 FK "Slavija"	15	-1	22
7 FK "Sloboda"	15	0	21
8 FK "Rudar Prijedor"	15	-1	21
9 FK "Olimpic"	15	-1	21
10 FK "Leotar"	15	-10	20
11 NK "Celik"	15	1	19
12 NK "Zvijezda"	15	-3	19
13 FK "Budućnost"	15	-3	17
14 HSK "Zrinjski"	15	-6	16
15 FK "Drina"	15	-12	14
16 FK "Velež"	15	-13	13

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AS Roma Tour Australia in 1966

BLAST
FROM
THE PAST

With Roy Hay

WHEN the suspension of Australia's membership of FIFA was lifted in 1963 tours by overseas clubs could resume. Everton and Chelsea arrived in 1964 and 1965 respectively, and they were followed in 1966 by Italian giant AS Roma. Roma had won the Inter-Cities Fairs Cup, the predecessor of the Europa Cup in 1961 and the Coppa Italia in 1964, but had narrowly escaped financial collapse in 1965. Supporters bailed out the club and a new president took over, so the trip to Australia was a fresh start.

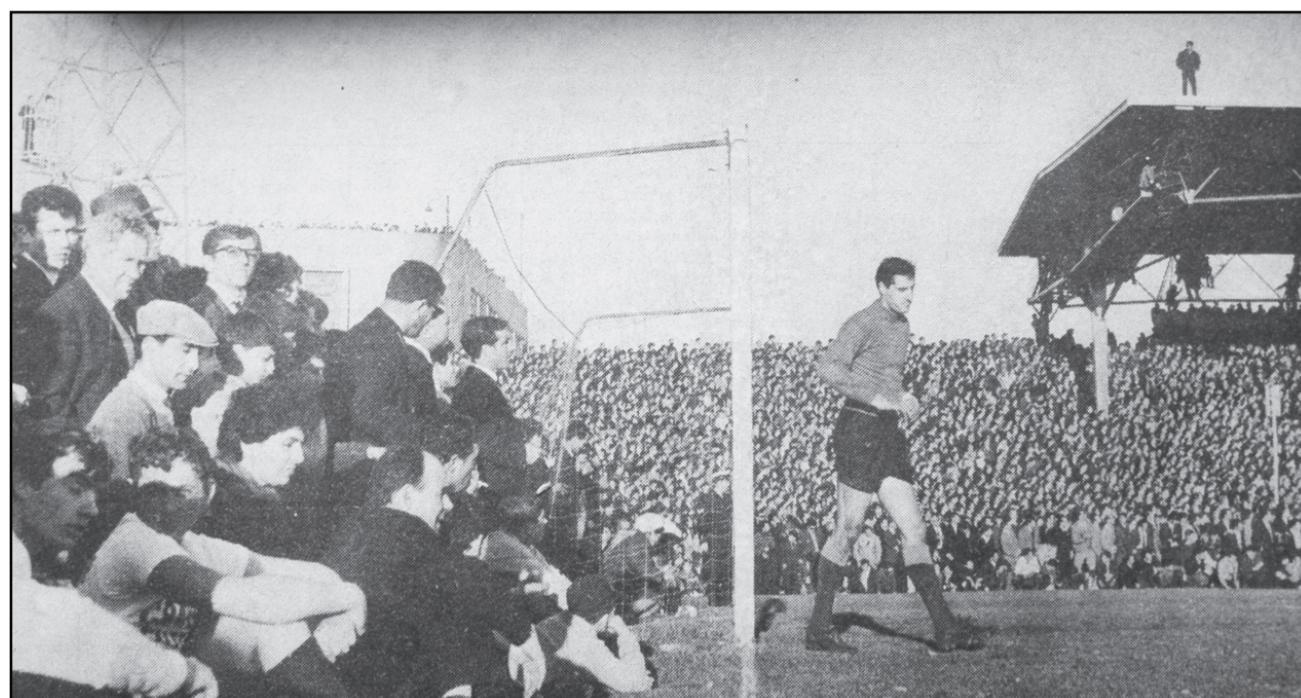
Roma was the first Italian club to arrive after the Second World War and it played two games against Victoria at Olympic Park in 1966, setting the crowd attendance record for that venue variously put at 37,500 and 35,856 in the first of these. Either way it is the crowd record for Olympic Park and more than double its capacity in 2011. Spectators filled the ground, encroaching to the very touchlines, while others clambered to vantage points such as the top of the grandstand roof, nearby trees and the back of the adjacent velodrome.

Roma won the first game by four goals to two after scoring in the first minute through Angelo Spanio, but when the Vics hit back with goals by Norm Gajda and Frank Micic, the crowd began singing 'Arrivederci Roma', before late efforts by Spanio again, Fulvio Francesconi and an overhead kick by Victor Benitez swung the game back to the visitor. The second match attracted 15,694. Roma won by a goal to nil.

Soccer News devoted most of its 12 pages to the tour in its issue of 2 June 1966, with a double page spread of Uwe Kuessner's photographs in the centre of the paper. The Victorian Soccer Federation was a major beneficiary. The two matches helped turn a 'considerable deficit in 1965 into big profit in 1966,' according to Bob Low, writing in the *Soccer World Annual* the next year. The Australian and the Age had several columns devoted to the visit by the Italians and tour companies and sponsors supported the encounters with advertisements.

Melbourne provided two of the stops on an intensive 8-game month-long tour which took in matches against Australia in Sydney, Northern New South Wales in Newcastle, New South Wales, Queensland, South and Western Australia. The Victorian Soccer Federation was castigated in the Sydney press when it refused to release more than two players for the Socceroos, but sole selector, Frank Parsons, went ahead and nominated four, though only one actually

AS Roman empire conquers Australia



Crowd scene at Olympic Park with Fabio Cudicini in the Roma goal. Source: Laurie Schwab, The Socceroos and their Opponents.



Victorian keeper Norm Hobson, Roma striker (9) Fabio Enzio and Victorian skipper Vic Janczyk watch the ball cross the line for a Roma goal. Photo: Uwe Kuessner. Source: Laurie Schwab collection. Inset: Bruce Morrow, who scored for NSW and the Socceroos against Roma. Source: Sid Grant's Soccer Records.



New South Wales team before the match against AS Roma, not in order in photograph: Peter Fuzes, Cliff van Blerk, George Nuttall, Danny Walsh, Alan Marnoch, Fil Bottalico, Geoff Sleight, Ricardo Campana, Archie Blue, John Watkiss, Doug Holden. Ron Giles was the substitute. Source: Laurie Schwab collection, Deakin University Library.

played against Roma—central defender Billy Rice.

All the games drew good crowds with the exception of the match against the Socceroos at the Sydney Showgrounds on 13 June, when the weather was bad and the pitch very heavy. The teams for that match were: Australia: Bill Rorke, Trevor Edwards, George Nuttall, Pat Hughes, Billy Rice, John Watkiss, Bruce Morrow, Ricardo Campana, John Giacometti, Danny Walsh, Doug Holden. AS Roma: Fabio Cudicini, Glaucio Tomasin, Mario Ardizzone, Francesco Capelli, Giacomo Lossi, Sergio Carpanesi, Lamberto Leonardi (Aldo Sensibile), Victor Benitez,

Riccardo Da Silva, Giuseppe Tamborini, Fulvio Francesconi.

Bruce Morrow scored for the Socceroos in 67 minutes from what the Italians claimed was well offside. Campana sent a long ball down the middle and Morrow raced on to it as the Italian defence stopped. Linesman Vince Dobinson kept his flag down and Morrow ran on to score. Australia was in touching distance of its first win over a touring team since the setting up of the Australian Soccer Federation. It was not till the 88th minute that Roma midfielder Giuseppe Tamborini got the equaliser, when he nipped in after the ball stuck in the mud between de-

fender Trevor Edwards and keeper Bill Rorke. Roger Lamb refereed the game. Joe Marston was the Australian coach.

The match in Newcastle against Northern NSW drew nearly 15 000 and was evenly balanced at two-one to the visitors when Bruce Morrow, who had scored already, hit a shot which keeper Alberto Ginulfi spilled against the post and along or over the goal line. Linesman Bill Jones kept his flag down and Roma made the best of the narrow escape. Victor Benitez grabbed a hat trick and the final goal came at the end of a 50-metre run by Fulvio Francesconi.

Roma played the New South

Wales state team in front of nearly a full house of over 32 000 at the Showgrounds and won by the odd goal in three, but then thrashed Queensland by six-nil, and South Australia by three-nil. The squad selected to represent Queensland was R Kelly, W Haig, G Kathage, Matt Jackson, Matt Hosie, Lance Petic, Graham McMillan, Ray Richards, Eric Pattison, R Edmunds, K Jones, with Ian Johnstone on standby if Pattison failed a fitness test. Roma keeper Fabio Cudicini, the father of present day Tottenham Hotspur goalie Carlo, got a surprise when he was told in the middle of the tour that he had been sold.

By the time the tourists got to Perth they were understandably tired and the West Australian team led by two goals to one with only 20 minutes left. That game was played at the magnificent new Perry Lakes Stadium which cost \$2 million. Somehow Roma's players roused themselves and powered away to a four-two result in the end. The West Australian team was: Lou Ivanoff, Roy Simpson, Morson, Marchant, Atkinson, Walley Musial; Ireson, Rod Reid, Paul Sobek, Henry Lukoszek, Magennis. Reserves: Norwood, Cairns, Andrioff. Their goals were scored by Reid and Lukoszek.

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FIRST GAME KICKS OFF AT 11.00am - LAST GAME 4.15pm

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MOOROOLBARK
MORELAND
WAVERLEY WANDERERS

GROUP 2
SOUTHERN STARS
CASEY COMETS
OLD SCOTCH
SANDRINGHAM

SATURDAY 5th MARCH

12.00 PM CASEY COMETS v SANDRINGHAM
1.25 PM MOOROOLBARK v MORELAND
2.50 PM SOUTHERN STARS v OLD SCOTCH
4.15 PM EASTERN LIONS v WAVERLEY WANDERERS

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WAG OF THE WEEK



Sylvie Van Der Vaart Age:32

Insignificant other: Rafael Van Der Vaart (Spurs)



Couch Potato Dept.

* ALL TIMES ARE AEST



SBS ONE
Monday February 28th,
4:30 pm FIFA Futbol Mundial
11:30 pm The World Game

SBS TWO
Monday February 28th
9:30 pm The World Game -

Wednesday 9 March
SBS ONE
6.30am - LIVE Round of 16 2nd Leg - Barcelona v Arsenal

SBS TWO
11.00pm - DELAYED Round of 16 2nd Leg - Shakhtar Donetsk v Roma

Wednesday 16 March
SBS ONE
6.30am - LIVE Round of 16 2nd Leg - Bayern Munich v Inter Milan

SBS TWO
11.40pm - DELAYED Round of 16 2nd Leg - Manchester United v Marseille

#Extra time/penalties apply to all matches

Thursday 10 March
SBS ONE
6.30am - LIVE (Round of 16 2nd Leg) - Schalke v Valencia

SBS TWO
8.30pm - DELAYED (Round of 16 2nd Leg) - Tottenham v AC Milan

FOX SPORTS

EPL WEEK 31
Tue Mar 1 Stoke v West Brom 6.55 am
Wed Mar 2 Chelsea v Manchester United 6.40 am

EPL WEEK 30
Sat Mar 5 Birmingham v West Brom 11.40 pm
Sun Mar 6 Arsenal v Sunderland 1.55 am
Sun Mar 6 Bolton v Aston Villa 1.55 am Viewers Choice
Sun Mar 6 Fulham v Blackburn 1.55 am Viewers Choice
Sun Mar 6 Newcastle v Everton 1.55 am Viewers Choice
Sun Mar 6 West Ham v Stoke 1.55 am Viewers Choice
Sun Mar 6 Manchester City v Wigan 4.25 am
Mon Mar 7 Liverpool v Manchester United 12.25 am
Mon Mar 7 Wolves v Tottenham 2.55 am
Tue Mar 8 Blackpool v Chelsea 6.55 am
Thu Mar 10 Everton v Birmingham 6.55 am

A-LEAGUE

Sat March 5
Preliminary Final
6.30 pm
(TBC)

ASIAN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Tue Mar 1 Gamba Osaka v Melbourne 9.00 pm
Wed Mar 2 Sydney FC v Suwon Bluewings 7.30 pm

ENGLISH FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Sun March 6
Cardiff v Ipswich 4.00 am

FOX SPORTS FC

Tue March 1 8.00 pm



one
HD

Tuesday 01st March

04:45 am Serie A Matchday 27: Palermo v Udinese
06:45 am LIVE: Serie A Matchday 27: A.C Milan v Napoli
10:30 pm World Football News

11:15 pm Arsenal v Arsenal v Birmingham [Carling Cup Final]

Wednesday 02nd March

07:00 am World Football News (Rpt)

Thursday 03rd March

07:00 am Football: The Serie A Highlights Show
07:30 am Bundesliga Weekly Highlights Matchday 24

Friday 04th March

03:30 am Serie A (Rpt) Matchday 27: Palermo v Udinese
05:30 am Liverpool v West Ham United v Liverpool

Saturday 05th March

02:00 am Serie A (Rpt) Matchday 27: A.C Milan v Napoli
04:00 am The Serie A Highlights Show (Rpt) Matchday 27

04:30 am Bundesliga Weekly Highlights (Rpt) Matchday 24

06:45 am LIVE: Serie A Matchday 28: Lecce v Roma

Saturday 05th March 2011

01:25 am LIVE: Bundesliga Matchday 25: Hannover v Bayern Munich

Asian Champions League action returns this week as Sydney FC and Melbourne Victory take on Asia's best.

**SETANTA
SPORTS**

Monday 28th February

1:55am SPL - Rangers vs St Johnstone LIVE
6:40am Serie A - Sampdoria vs Inter Milan LIVE
9:00am Serie A - Catania vs Genoa
10:45am Serie A - Cagliari vs Lazio
4:00pm Serie A - Bari vs Fiorentina
5:45pm Eredivisie - PSV Eindhoven vs Ajax

Tuesday 1st March

1:00am Serie A - Cesena vs Chievo
2:45am Serie A - Brescia vs Lecce
9:45am Bundesliga - Frankfurt vs Stuttgart

Wednesday 2nd March

6:25am FA Cup Fifth Round - Everton vs Reading LIVE

Thursday 3rd March

6:40am Scottish Cup 5th Round Replay - Celtic vs Rangers LIVE
9:30am FA Cup Fifth Round - Man City vs Aston Villa
11:40am Copa Libertadores - Santos vs Cerro Porteno LIVE

Saturday 5th March

6:25am Bundesliga - Dortmund vs Cologne LIVE
3:55pm J-League - Nagoya Grampus vs Yokohama F Marinos LIVE

Sunday 6th March

1:55am SPL - Celtic vs Hamilton LIVE

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SMFC TV

Channel 31

Every Wed 7pm

The

Green Gully

Football Show

Every Saturday
10.30am

Extra Time

Magazine Show

Every Wednesday
8pm

1

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FULL NAME: Andrew Viola
BIRTHPLACE: Melbourne
BIRTH DATE: 06-03-1989
HEIGHT: 188 cms
WEIGHT: 88 kgs
MARRIED: Single and ready to mingle
CAR: Mazda Astina 323 (It doesn't matter how it looks ... It's all about how it sounds)
NICKNAME: Viv or V
PREVIOUS CLUBS: Bulleen Lions
REPRESENTATIVE HONOURS:
 AGSV representative teams
CHILDHOOD FOOTBALL HERO:
 Roberto Baggio
FAVOURITE O/S PLAYER: Luca Toni
FAVOURITE HAL PLAYER: Carlos Hernandez
FAVOURITE FORMER SOCCEROO:
 Mark Viduka
FAVOURITE CURRENT SOCCEROO:
 Marco Bresciano
MOST MEMORABLE MATCH AS A PLAYER: 2005 and 2006 AGS grand finals
MOST MEMORABLE MATCH AS A FAN: 2007 A-league Grand final (Victory won 6-0)
MOST MEMORABLE GOAL YOU'VE SCORED: I don't score too many these days but in under 8s I scored the golden goal in extra time to win the Thomastown Cup for Banyule Bulls
EARLIEST FOOTBALL MEMORY: Under 6 playing for Eltham Redbacks in my first game
FUNNIEST MOMENT IN FOOTBALL: When George Goutzioulis (Shaggy) cleaned up a goal keeper mannequin whilst the team was running laps at training
BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT: Losing the VPL Grand Final last year
WORST INJURY: Ruptured ankle ligaments
MOST DIFFICULT OPPONENT:
 Dimitri Tsiaras
FAVOURITE AWAY GROUND:
 Knights Stadium
SUPERSTITIONS: I listen to the same song on my way to the ground every match
TYPICAL MATCH DAY MEAL: Tuna sandwich and grilled chicken
WHAT ARE YOUR STRENGTHS: Fitness, strength and tackling
WHAT ARE YOUR WEAKNESSES: Drinking too much of Boo's cordial at half time
FAVOURITE TEAM WHEN GROWING UP: Inter Milan
FAVOURITE OTHER SPORTS:
 Basketball and Formula One
FAVOURITE OTHER SPORTSPERSON:
 Valentino Rossi
FAVOURITE FOODS: Nonna's Lasagna and Grill'd
FAVOURITE ACTOR/ACTRESS:
 Morgan Freeman / Snooki
HOBBIES: Fishing, Skiing and Sun baking
FAVOURITE HOLIDAY RESORT: Rye beach
FAVOURITE NIGHTSPOT: TFU, Sorry Grandma and The Bangz
IDEAL DATE: Tara Reid
FAVOURITE TV SHOWS: Jersey Shore, How I Met Your Mother and Lost
FAVOURITE MUSIC: Electro/House and anything from DJ SK
FAVOURITE FILM: The Godfather
LAST SOCCER SHIRT YOU BOUGHT:
 Italian 2006 World Cup shirt
FUNNIEST RUMOUR YOU'VE HEARD ABOUT YOURSELF: That I have the best body in the VPL
BIGGEST INFLUENCE ON CAREER: My Dad
BIGGEST DRAG IN SOCCER: Sunday morning games
FOOTBALL AMBITION:
 Avenge last year's grand final defeat and win a VPL Championship
WHICH PERSON IN THE WORLD WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO MEET?:
 Michael Schumacher
YOUR TIP FOR THIS YEAR'S HAL:
 Brisbane Roar
YOUR TIP FOR THIS YEAR'S VPL:
 Richmond Eagles

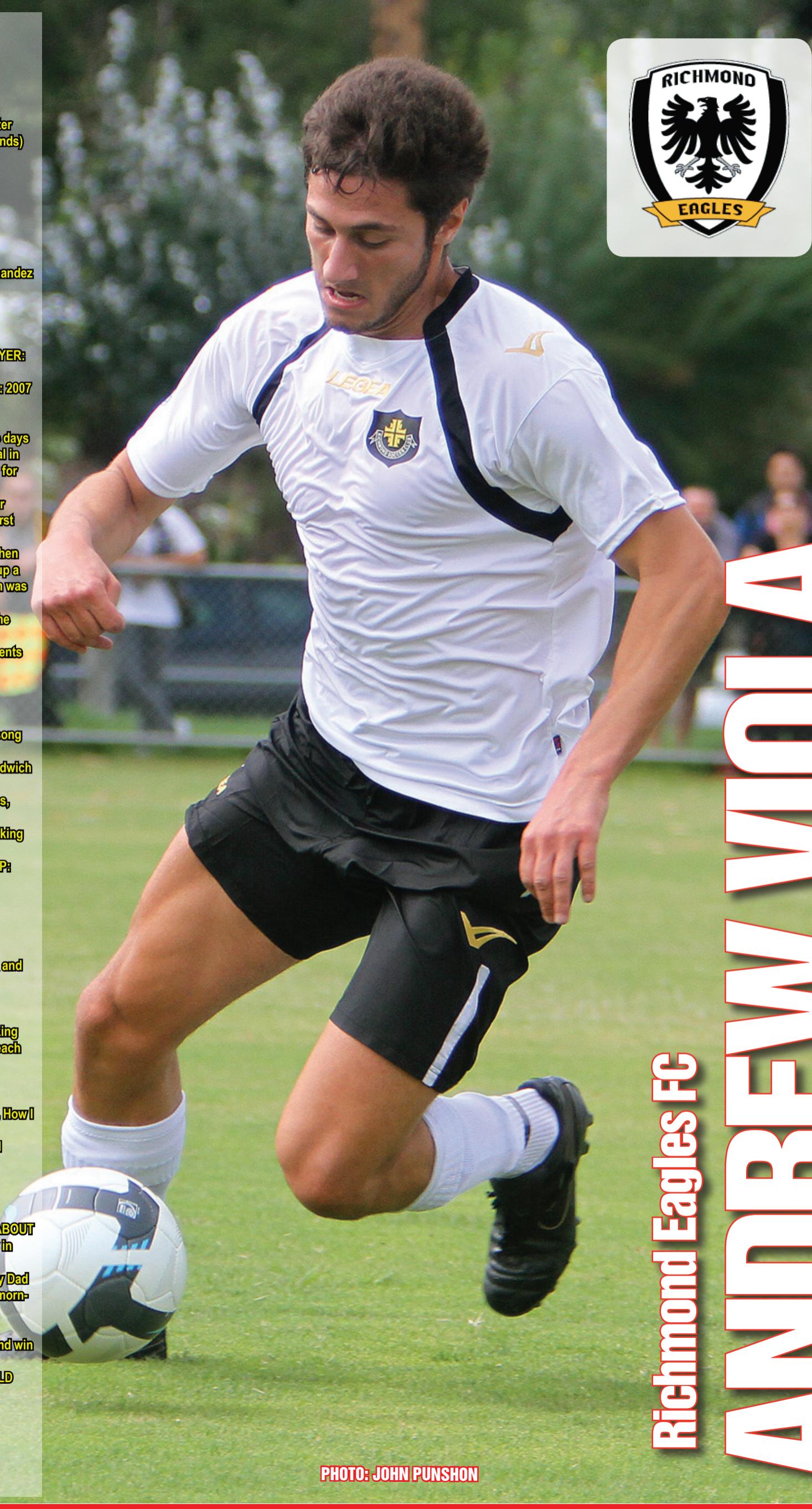


PHOTO: JOHN PUNSHON

Richmond Eagles FC
 ANDREW VIOLA

ANDREW VIOLA

LONDON CALLING




With Adam North in the UK

THE race for this year's Premier League crown is currently being led by Manchester United. Going into this season many predicted that, with their massive spending power, it would be the blue side of Manchester who would be challenging United for the title, but this has simply not been the case.

Going into March, it looks like only Arsenal will provide a challenge to United's ambition to win yet another Premier League trophy. So, with deep-pocketed Manchester City being yet again close but not close enough, what exactly do the City boys need to do in order to bring Premier League success to the City of Manchester Stadium?

First of all, they have to change their manager. Now I do not have a problem with Roberto Mancini.

As suave, dashing, scarf wearing Italians go he is certainly one of the best, yet he simply isn't the man to bring success to the club. It appears that the players City are signing aren't bought to fit into any sort of game-plan that Mancini has; rather he is seemingly adapting his system around the players. Of course that isn't his fault, as the clubs owners seem to want complete control over all players brought in, but it is ultimately up to him as to how the City team take shape each week, and to be honest at times this season they have looked unbalanced and unsure of how to impose their own style of play.

Of course his replacement is purely hypothetical, as who knows whether City's money-bags owners can tempt him into taking over, but for me the idea manager to take control right now is undoubtedly Jose Mourinho. Of course it doesn't take a journalistic genius to suggest that a man with that much recent success with various clubs should be taking over, but for me he is indeed an ideal fit.

Personally I don't have as much love for Jose as others in the media have. Despite all of his recent achievements, of which there have been many, he has still to build a dynasty at one club, in the same way that Sir Alex has at United or Monseigneur Wenger has at the Gunners. But this isn't

a criticism of him at all; it is just a point of fact. His managing style is to take complete control over a team, get them all playing his style of football, minimise player's interactions with media and the like, and obtain immediate success.

And it is this style of management that makes him so well suited to City. In an era when owners, and to a certain extent fans, demand immediate success, Mourinho is king. Manchester City aren't looking right now for any sort of sustained glory; they want trophies and they want them yesterday, and 'The Special One' is unquestionably the right man to come in and deliver it for them. Of course they would have to tempt him away from arguably the biggest club in the world to do so, but if they could get him it would be the best acquisition that they could possibly get.

Mourinho's first point of business would be to trim down the flabby squad that City currently have. Although it is true that any Championship winning side usually has a good squad, as opposed to just a good first team, the City squad is overflowing with quality. Mancini is finding it a near impossible to keep all of his squad happy, and if you were to look at the way the players interact with each other you simply could not say that it looks a happy camp.

What Mourinho would do would be to minimise the squad to around 16 or 17 key players who he knows will mould together into a single unit, all pulling in the same direction to achieve the same goal. The way Mourinho forms his teams is not unlike a childhood three-legged race, where two kids tie their respective left and right legs together, and have to run along side by side, working together the whole way. In his side, Mourinho makes sure each player knows his role, and makes sure that each member of the team is moving the correct leg at the right time.

However at City right now, despite the undoubted quality that the squad already possesses, it would not just be a case of moulding what is there. Mourinho, or indeed whoever takes on what is quickly becoming one of the toughest jobs in world football, would still have to bring in a

An Idiot's Guide to winning the English Premier League



Roberto Mancini will be hoping to be holding more than just a scarf when the EPL championship race is determined.

few players, as City are still lacking in certain areas.

The most obvious problem that City have in my opinion is that their defence is simply not good enough. Interestingly, City actually have one of the best defensive records in the league right now, but the reason for that is not because of the defence themselves, but rather because of the fact that the whole team are defensively orientated. They often start with two holding, defensive midfielders, as well as wide men who track back and tuck in when needed, leaving just one man up front. In order for City to actually contend in the big games, they need to provide more of an attacking threat, which of course would leave their defence a little more open, which in turn would expose their weaknesses.

An interesting comparison, and one which I'm sure City fans wouldn't be too enamoured by, is with their Manchester counterparts United. The Red Devils also employ a somewhat defensive approach in many of their big games, especially in Europe, yet they still have an attacking mind set. As soon as they get the ball back they are ready to spring into attack, even if it means leav-

ing themselves a little exposed at the back. And that is why, in Ferdinand and Vidic, they have perhaps the best centre-back partnership in the league, so that they can contend with the attack threat placed upon them. The main void in their back line that City need to fill is at left back, as none of the players that they have brought in to fill the hole so far, such as Wayne Bridge, have been good enough. A solid left back would ensure much needed protection for their inconsistent centre-backs, as well providing better balance to their attacks. They probably also need one more centre back, as both Kolo Toure and Joleon Lescott have done little to inspire confidence that they could consistently shut teams out if left a little uncovered.

City's midfield is easily the strongest part of their squad. And it is here that they have made arguably their best acquisition not named Carlos, and that man is Kolo Toure's brother Yaya. The taller Toure has been impressive for City this season, providing much needed support to the attack whilst still providing cover defensively. And these are the types of players that need to be

brought in. Toure was undoubtedly good at Barcelona, yet in no way was he a key player for them. At City he is simply flourishing as he fits perfectly into the mould of a box-to-box midfielder, something which City desperately needed. It is a waste of time for them to bring in someone like Mario Balotelli, who not only has yet to set the world alight with his football, but also a man, or should I say a boy, whose spiky personality is near impossible to control. They need to bring in players like Yaya, who fits a void in the team, and shows real desire to push forward with his teammates to achieve success.

And that brings us back to Mourinho. As he did at Chelsea, Jose would be able to identify the two or three players he needed to bring in to finalise his squad.

And I do think that City are just two or three players short of being as good as United, Arsenal, or anyone else in the Premier League, as well as many in Europe as well. He would build the right squad, create the right atmosphere, and set his team up with the right tactical knowledge to finally bring success to the blue side of Manchester.

Indeed the City fans may not be

excited by the way their team go about their football, but traditionally they aren't as predisposed to good football in the same way that fans of say Tottenham are, so that really shouldn't be a problem either.

Of course, near all of this is hypothetical, as although I do believe Mancini will be gone by this time next year, I do not think that the City board would approach Mourinho about becoming their new boss. And I also doubt that he'd take the position if offered, as I'm sure at this stage, aside from his national side and Chelsea, there aren't any teams Mourinho has the desire to manage.

Personally, I hope that City continue with their current method of bringing in players and trying to fit them all into one cohesive unit. Of course it doesn't work, but that's what makes it so entertaining to watch for us fans and informed opinion writers who have no bias towards their side. However if they do take heed of some of the points here raised, I must concede that they could in fact become a real force in both English and European football for years to come.

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LONDON CALLING




With Leroy Robinson in the UK

SOMETIMES a glance at a tree doesn't do it justice. It may have majestic branches and flowering leaves but underneath the roots may show signs of rot and decay. The Premier League should take note of this because although things appear healthy for the most watched football league in the world, no club and no league is immune to being humbled.

That may seem overly dramatic. February has been kind to English clubs in Europe. Eight games - five wins and three draws - against teams like AC Milan, Barcelona and Marseille. With Manchester City and Liverpool having progressed into the last 16 of the Europa League and with second legs yet to be played in the UEFA Champions League things look healthy for English clubs. Scrape beneath this healthy exterior and there are potential problems in the Premier League paradise.

Birmingham and Sunderland are big city clubs with strong fan bases in their own local territories. With football being the most popular sport in England you would imagine these two big city clubs would have no problems filling their grounds - with capacities of 30,009 and 49,000 respectively. You would be wrong. Since taking over Birmingham City in 2009, Carson Yeung has explored the option of moving into a new stadium. Two years later the plans haven't gotten by the exploration stage.

"This is at a very early stage and we do not want to heighten expectations too much," admitted Acting Chairman Peter Pannu on the club's official website. "There are lots of people we need to run this by, including sponsors who may be interested in investing," he added.

...football cannot ignore the downward trend in attendance. What needs to be emphasised is that nothing can replace being at a football match in person.

However, it is more likely that the club will redevelop St. Andrews. With attendances static at 25,000 it makes no sense for Brum to move to a 55,000 capacity stadium.

"We have not ruled out a stadium move but our primary concern with that option would be our average attendances. Moving to a 55,000 capacity stadium may not be prudent at this stage." He said adding, "And we know that quite a lot of our fans want to stay put as well so we need to make sure we consider everything before deciding on

how to move forward."

It's nice to see a football club considering its most important people - the paying customer.

Yet before they get a round of applause the stance of the club has to be put in context. Here is a club that en route to the league cup final played to home crowds of approx 6,000 (Rochdale), 9,000 (MK Dons), 15,000 (Brentford), 27,000 (Aston Villa) and 27,000 (West Ham). If not being able to sell out a Second City derby with Aston Villa wasn't enough, both Coventry and Sheffield Wednesday requested extra tickets for FA Cup games at Birmingham and were refused. Less than 17,000 turned up for both games and rumour had it that Birmingham was embarrassed that the away team would enjoy much more of the support than the home team. Over the last two years Birmingham have lost around 1,200 fans per game with their neighbours Aston Villa losing nearly three thousand.

Where have these fans gone? A clue might lie with Sunderland. The Mackem's announced a net loss of £25.5 million for the year ending July 2010. This is mainly due to the club continuing to invest in new players, as evidenced by owner Ellis Short converting £19 million of loans into shares in the club and announcing a further £25 million to be pumped into Sunderland.

Underpinning this investment is a goal set by Sunderland Chairman Niall Quinn of attracting an average of 40,000 fans to every home match and so far they're not far off with attendances at 39,351 - 7th in the league and part of the shortfall might be down to away fans not taking up their allotted tickets to travel to Wearside.

However this isn't good enough for Quinn. He wants more fans to attend home games. You'd think perhaps he'd be happy with the 7th best attendance in the league but to put it into context the stadium is 80% full on match days.

Two years ago at this stage Sunderland were attracting an average of 42,546 so in many ways it is understandable why Quinn has his knickers in a twist. His main beef is toward fans who watch coverage of the team's games in pubs and clubs using foreign satellite subscriptions. Portsmouth publican Karen Murphy was prosecuted for showing EPL football through such a sub and all indications are that the European Court will ratify the initial decision that her actions were not illegal. With Sky subs to landlords being seen by some as extortionate landlords would be free to give sky the finger and buy subs at a fraction of the cost, which could adversely affect football clubs by screening games at 3pm on a Saturday.

Quinn maintains that such viewings are to the detriment of his club. Earlier this month Quinn used strong language to chal-

Trouble in Paradise?



Last one out please switch off the lights. Sunderland's Stadium of Light with plenty of room to manoeuvre.

lence fans to return to the club, saying he "despised" the fact fans were staying away.

"I'm delighted it [the use of the word despised] got us to the front page of the papers and the radio programmes and at last I can have a meaningful debate. I'm able to tell you our crowd has lost around 6,000 people in the time we became successful," said Quinn in an interview with the Daily Mail earlier this month.

With all due respect to Quinn this is a problem that they may have to be addressed with by more creative means than a debate.

"Anybody who says they can't afford to come to the game, there's no way I would ever criticise, the problem is people are going down to the pub and spending equivalent amounts of money."

He added: *"If a core number of people want to do it that way instead of coming to support the club, then maybe I'll have to question my role here. That's how seriously I take this. I want to say I'm delighted to have the debate."*

All credit to Quinn but I don't think such threats will bring fans back. Yet at least he's willing to open a dialogue with fans. However, the Premier League clubs should get no sympathy if fans turn away and watch games on TV rather than at the stadium. The clubs embraced Sky TV and the vast sums of money whilst agreeing for games to be screened at various times over the weekend on Saturday, Sunday and even Mondays and at times that are inconvenient for fans.

Wages became inflated and now the very medium that started the "revolution" could be responsible for its downward curve. It's debatable if clubs were thinking of the fans when they took the TV money yet now some of the sheep have left the pen the farmer cries about not having enough wool.

In essence this story is about fan expectations and providing an entertaining product at value for money. There are only four places in the Champions League

and only so many clubs expected to challenge for those places. Clubs like Manchester United and Liverpool had traditionally drawn support from outside their local areas and in many ways so have Tottenham and Arsenal. Due to geography other clubs don't have the same pulling power. The attraction of the bigger clubs is in their stadia, history and expectations, something Sunderland and Birmingham cannot match.

Until Quinn engages fans in debate there's no knowing if money is the primary factor for their absence. In the Premier League there is no doubt, in my mind, that the atmosphere at grounds isn't what it was when I watched the game. Back in the 1980s it was possible to turn up on the day and get into the ground. Sometimes I stood on the terraces and at other times sat, depending on ticket availability. Crowds were inevitably bigger due to the allowance for standing behind the goal.

With all-seater stadia a visit to some stadia is like a trip to the opera, waiting for something to happen so one can cheer. And what do people do before chanting or when there's a corner? They stand up anyway. There was no real consultation with fans about all-seater stadia and that is something that should be addressed. Do fans want to stand again at football matches again? Higher capacity arenas should mean cheaper prices and that would at least counter part of the Sunderland argument.

What the Sunderland model has shown is that fans will not mindlessly go to every game. Therefore, though Quinn's approach to delve into the community for the answers is admirable, pleading with fans to return to the Stadium of Light will not work.

The only way to get the crowds back is to emphasise the entertainment factor in watching the team and to provide affordable packages and even special offers which incorporate travel, food and tickets to the game, an all-in package. In a world where there are other entertaining things to do with our families on a Saturday afternoon perhaps it is time

football clubs shed their complacency and actively tried to attract fans to the game, rather than relying on innate loyalty.

Overall the state of English football is healthy amongst the top clubs. As long as they continue to spend within their means, perform in the league and qualify for the UCL they will see very little drop off. The problems may come if teams like Chelsea and Manchester City lose their benefactors and return being the second biggest clubs in their respective cities, clubs for whom a good season was reaching a cup semi final and finishing in the top six. Will City and Chelsea fans tolerate bread and water when they have become accustomed to caviar and champagne?

That is for the future and football cannot ignore the downward trend in attendance. What needs to be emphasised is that nothing can replace being at a football match in person. Yet until the powers that be at clubs are seen to reengage with the paying customer and ask them if they want games on Monday nights and on Sunday lunchtime then they will continue to be accused of being out of touch.

The challenge for football is to embrace changes. Cheap foreign satellite packages may mean a reduction in the number of away fans travelling the length and breadth of the country, especially to watch games on a Monday night but this is the fault of the

schedulers rather than the fans. Why not have only local derbies on Monday nights if that's the case? Or how about switching the Monday night game to a Friday night?

It may be time to have a dedicated online Premier League Channel broadcasting news and games to a worldwide audience along with a Premier League website that actually interacts with the fans more and fosters debate. At present the official site is no more than a notice board for facts, figures and upcoming games. How about online season tickets for fans in certain areas to watch their teams play away from home?

However, just as there are people who would rather download movies or buy pirated DVDs than go to the cinema, there will always be people who would rather pay nothing to watch the game.

The depressing thing for Birmingham and Sunderland is that when all is said and done nothing makes fans return to a club like being entertained and being successful, words I don't hear much of in connection with St. Andrews and the Stadium of Light.

Sources:
ESPN soccernet
theoffside.com

CHANGING ATTENDANCES IN ENGLISH FOOTBALL

Club	Stadium Capacity	Average Crowds March '08	Average Crowds 23 Feb '11
Arsenal	60,432	60,062	60,010
Manchester United	76,212	75,638	75,007
Manchester City	47,300	42,069	46,416
Chelsea	42,449	41,499	41,420
Everton	40,170	36,766	35,850
West Ham	35,089	34,616	33,273
Tottenham	36,247	35,931	35,819
Liverpool	45,362	43,529	42,107
Aston Villa	42,719	39,848	37,077
Sunderland	49,000	42,546	39,351
Birmingham City	30,009	26,176	24,905
Wigan	25,023	18,740	16,228
Blackburn Rovers	31,367	23,369	24,069
Bolton	27,879	20,412	22,169



United thrash Wigan to extend lead

EPL:

MANCHESTER United has moved four points clear at the top of the English Premier League table after they comfortably defeated Wigan Athletic 4-0 at the DW Stadium on the weekend.

In the other games played Aston Villa defeated Blackburn 4-1, Wolverhampton thrashed Blackpool 4-0, Newcastle drew 1-1 with Bolton and Everton defeated Sunderland 2-0.

Manchester made a number of changes to the squad that faced Marseille mid-week in the Champions League, including Javier Hernandez for Dimitar Berbatov. And it was Hernandez who opened the scoring for the Red Devils in the 17th minute when he put the finishing touch to a great-counter attack involving Nani and Wayne Rooney.

Edwin Van der Sar made a countless number of saves in the first half to deny Wigan who arguably should have had at least two goals. But it was United who finally grabbed a second goal in the 75th minute thanks to Hernandez once again. Wayne Rooney played Hernandez in behind the defence with a quality ball before he controlled the ball well and placed it past Ali Al Habsi with a cool finish.

Wayne Rooney and Fabio added two goals late in the game to complete the rout. The win maintains United's position at the top of the table whilst Wigan moves down to 19th.

Everton were looking to back-up their victory against Chelsea in the FA Cup last week with a much needed three points in the Premier League against Sunderland. Kieran Richardson gave the home side an early scare when his shot crossed the face of the goal, but Everton made Sunderland rue their missed chance just a few minutes later.

Leon Osman fed in Jermaine Beckford whose strike took a deflection off Titus Bramble and fell into the net. Beckford then grabbed a second in the 39th minute when he struck home Mikel Arteta's cross.

The second half saw Everton dominate but they couldn't add to their advantage. Everton now move up to 10th on the table thanks to the win whilst Sunderland remains in 7th.

Aston Villa hammered Blackburn 4-1 at Villa Park with all goals coming in the second half of the match. Four minutes into the second half Ashley Young put Villa ahead from the penalty-spot after being brought down in



League leaders Manchester United tighten their grip on the title race and move four points clear of Arsenal with a 4-0 win at Wigan.

the box by Keith Andrews. Grant Hanley scored an own-goal for Blackburn in the 62nd minute after he put in a dangerous cross from Albrighton, and Villa made it 3-0 not long after courtesy of Stewart Downing.

Nikola Kalinic grabbed a goal back for Blackburn in the 81st minute but any hopes of a comeback were immediately dashed when Ashley Young scored his second goal of the match minutes later. The loss was soured even further for Blackburn as their skipper Ryan Nelsen was sent off late in the match.

The action continued over night with West Ham hosting Liverpool and Manchester City facing Fulham.

BUNDESLIGA:

YOUNG Aussie goalkeeper Mitchell Langerak made his debut for Borussia Dortmund on the weekend against none other than Bayern Munich. Dortmund came out victorious in that match, 3-1, with Langerak putting in a brilliant performance despite not being able to keep a clean sheet.

It was the visiting side who drew first blood when Lucas Barrios scored in just the eight minute of the match. In a very end-to-end match both sides were creating number of chances and it was no surprise when Bayern levelled just seven minutes later thanks to Luiz Gustavo.

But Dortmund was back in front almost instantly after Nuri Sahin curled a shot past Bayern 'keeper Thomas Kraft, before Mats Hummels goal on the hour mark all but sealed the win. Langerak put in a brilliant performance making a number of saves and key interceptions.

The win sees Dortmund extend their massive gap at the top of the table over Bayer Leverkusen to 13 points with Bayern Munich moving down a spot to 4th.

In other matches Kaiserslautern drew 1-1 with Hamburger SV, Hoffenheim lost 2-1 at home to Mainz, Koln defeated Freiburg 1-0, St. Pauli lost 1-0 at home to Hannover and Schalke drew 1-1 with Nurnberg.

LA LIGA:

BARCELONA has continued their march towards the La Liga title after a dominant 3-0 win away to Mallorca whilst their title contenders Real Madrid slipped up against Deportivo La Coruna.

Lionel Messi, David Villa and Pedro were the scorers for Barcelona as they extended their lead at the top of the La Liga to 7 points over Madrid.

The best Real could do was manage a 0-0 draw away to Coruna in a match they should have comfortably won. Deportivo withstood some great pressure from Real late in the game which saw Adebayor and Ronaldo hit the post.

In the other games Sevilla threw away their lead twice to draw 2-2 away to Atletico Madrid, Espanyol thrashed Real Sociedad 4-1 and Sporting Gijon drew 0-0 at home to Real Zaragoza.

LIGUE 1:

RENNES has moved to the top of the Ligue 1 table thanks to a 2-0 win over Lens at home. Goals to Abdoulrazak Boukari and Victor Montano lifted Rennes above Lille on the table, with Lille to face Lyon on Monday morning.

In the fight for relegation Monaco suffered a massive blow as they let a two-goal lead slip to draw 2-2 at home to Caen meaning they are still in the bottom three.

Nice have opened up a small gap between them and the drop zone after a 2-0 win away from home against St Ettiene.

Elsewhere Arles drew 1-1 with Brest, Stade Rennes recorded a 2-0 win over Lens, Sochaux drew 0 - 0 with Montpellier, Valenciennes drew 0-0 against Lorient and Bordeaux defeated Auxerre 3-0.

SERIE A:

THERE was only one game on Sunday morning in the Serie A as Bologna defeated Juventus 2-0 at the Stadio Olimpico.

Juventus had the better of the first half, controlling possession without making many opportunities. The closest they came was a Vincenzo Iaquinta strike which struck the post right before half time.

But the visitors took a surprise lead seconds after the re-start when Marco Di Vaio lofted the ball over a stranded Marco Storari.

Juventus searched for an equalizer but Matri and Bonucci's efforts went begging. But Bologna then added a second effectively killing off the game. It was Di Vaio again, this time showing brilliant control by dribbling past two defenders and slotting it past Storari.

Juventus missed the opportunity to move up to equal fifth on the table and remain 7th. Bologna moved up one spot to 11th above Fiorentina.

UK Results

Barclays Premier League
Aston Villa 4-1 Blackburn
Everton 2-0 Sunderland
Newcastle 1-1 Bolton
Wigan 0-4 Man Utd
Wolverhampton 4-0 Blackpool

Npower Championship
Barnsley 0-2 Norwich
Bristol City 0-2 Scunthorpe
Crystal Palace 3-3 Reading
Doncaster 1-1 Watford
Hull 0-2 Cardiff
Ipswich 0-2 Portsmouth
Leicester 1-1 Coventry
Middlesbrough 0-3 QPR
Millwall 0-0 Nott'm Forest
Preston 1-2 Burnley
Sheff Utd 0-1 Derby
Swansea 3-0 Leeds

Npower League One
Brentford 1-0 Bristol Rovers
Carlisle 0-1 Shrewsbury
Dag & Red 1-2 Bournemouth
Exeter 1-2 Hartlepool
Huddersfield 2-2 Leyton Orient
MK Dons 1-0 Brighton
Oldham 0-5 Peterborough
Plymouth 2-1 Colchester
Southend 0-1 Swindon
Tranmere 0-1 Yeovil
Walsall 0-0 Rochdale

Npower League Two
Accrington Stanley 1-0 Torquay
Aldershot 1-2 Port Vale
Barnet 4-2 Lincoln City
Bradford 3-2 Stockport
Burton Albion 2-4 Rotherham
Bury 3-1 Crewe
Chesterfield 0-2 Morecambe
Macclesfield 0-1 Wycombe
Oxford Utd 0-2 Hereford
Shrewsbury 0-0 Gillingham
Southend 1-1 Northampton
Stevenage 4-0 Cheltenham

Clydesdale Bank Premier League
Aberdeen 0-0 Hearts
Hamilton 1-1 Dundee Utd
Hibernian 2-0 Inverness CT
Kilmarnock 2-0 St Mirren

Scottish First Division
Dundee 1-1 Morton
Falkirk 2-0 Cowdenbeath
Queen of South 1-3 Dunfermline
Raith Rovers 2-1 Stirling
Ross County 0-0 Partick Thistle

Scottish Second Division
Ayr 2-0 Brechin
East Fife 0-1 Airdrie Utd
Forfar 2-1 Dumbarton
Livingston 4-0 Alloa
Stenhousemuir 4-2 Peterhead

Scottish Third Division
Albion 0-1 Berwick
Annan Athletic 2-1 East Stirling
Clyde 4-2 Stranraer
Elgin 3-2 Arbroath
Montrose 0-2 Queen's Park

Juventus 0-2 Bologna

EPL

P	GD	Pts
1 Man Utd	27	36 60
2 Arsenal	27	30 56
3 Man City	27	19 49
4 Tottenham	27	7 47
5 Chelsea	26	24 45
6 Liverpool	27	3 39
7 Bolton	28	1 37
8 Sunderland	28	-2 37
9 Newcastle	28	4 36
10 Everton	27	-1 33
11 Stoke	27	-3 33
12 Aston Villa	28	-12 33
13 Blackburn	28	-11 32
14 Blackpool	28	-13 32
15 Fulham	27	0 31
16 Birmingham	26	-10 30
17 Wolves	28	-15 28
18 West Brom	27	-17 28
19 Wigan	28	-22 27
20 West Ham	27	-18 25

Bundesliga

P	GD	Pts
1 Borussia Dortmund	24	38 58
2 Bayer Leverkusen	23	16 45
3 Hannover 96	24	3 44
4 Bayern Munich	24	20 42
5 Mainz	24	7 40
6 Hamburg	24	3 37
7 SC Freiburg	24	0 37
8 Nuremberg	24	2 36
9 TSG Hoffenheim	24	6 33
10 Schalke 04	24	0 30
11 Cologne	24	-11 29
12 St Pauli	24	-11 28
13 Eintracht Frankfurt	23	-8 27
14 Wolfsburg	24	-5 26
15 FC Kaiserslautern	24	-9 24
16 Werder Bremen	23	-20 24
17 VfB Stuttgart	23	-7 19
18 Borussia M'gladbach	24	-24 19
Bayern Munich 1-3 Borussia Dortmund		
Cologne 1-0 SC Freiburg		
FC Kaiserslautern 1-1 Hamburg		
Schalke 04 1-1 Nuremberg		
St Pauli 0-1 Hannover 96		
TSG Hoffenheim 1-2 Mainz		
Wolfsburg 2-1 Borussia M'gladbach		

Serie A

P	GD	Pts
1 AC Milan	26	26 55
2 Napoli	26	19 52
3 Inter Milan	26	18 50
4 Lazio	26	11 48
5 Udinese	26	12 44
6 Roma	26	3 42
7 Juventus	27	7 41
8 Palermo	26	8 40
9 Cagliari	26	4 35
10 Genoa	26	-1 35
11 Bologna	27	-5 35
12 Fiorentina	26	0 33
13 Chievo	26	-1 31
14 Sampdoria	26	-4 31
15 Lecce	26	-18 27
16 Parma	26	-11 27
17 Catania	26	-12 26
18 Brescia	26	-13 23
19 Cesena	26	-17 22
20 Bari	26	-26 15

La Liga

P	GD	Pts
1 Barcelona	25	63 68
2 Real Madrid	25	36 61
3 Valencia	24	13 48
4 Villarreal	24	18 46
5 Espanyol	25	-2 40
6 Athletic Bilbao	24	4 38
7 Sevilla	25	-2 35
8 Atletico Madrid	25	2 34
9 Real Sociedad	25	-5 34
10 Getafe	24	-3 31
11 Mallorca	25	-9 31
12 Racing	24	-12 28
13 Deportivo	25	-14 27
14 Osasuna	24	-5 25
15 Sporting Gijon	25	-8 25
16 Hercules	24	-14 25
17 Levante	24	-12 24
18 Real Zaragoza	25	-15 24
19 Almeria	24	-16 21
20 Malaga	24	-19 20
Atletico Madrid 2-2 Sevilla		
Deportivo La Coruna 0-0 Real Madrid		
Espanyol 4-1 Real Sociedad		
Mallorca 0-3 Barcelona		
Sporting Gijon 0-0 Real Zaragoza		

SPL

P	GD	Pts
1 Celtic	26	44 64
2 Rangers	24	30 56
3 Hearts	27	19 55
4 Kilmarnock	27	7 39
5 Motherwell	27	-6 34
6 Inverness CT	27	1 33
7 Dundee Utd	24	-3 31
8 St Johnstone	25	-12 30
9 Aberdeen	27	-14 30
10 Hibernian	27	-15 28
11 St Mirren	27	-22 22
12 Hamilton	26	-29 15

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PREMIERSHIP

Round 16

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Imminent Relegation Battle Draws Nearer

By Peter Parthimos

Nth Melbourne FC v Mickleham FC

First game on the card, saw an out of form Nth Melbourne FC take on an inconsistent Mickleham FC, it was Mickleham who started the brighter taking it up to North, with North losing their last two clashes it appeared it would be three in a row. In a fiery encounter Mickleham match North all the way goal for goal. At six all it was anybodies game, it wasn't till the last 30 sec, when a clever free kick found its way to M.Pedic for the winner. A great spectacle, as North collect 3 valuable points and Mickleham sink further into the relegation zone.

Nth Melbourne FC 7 Mickleham FC 6

NMFC goals: M.Pedic 2, J.Berrientos, T.Prori, B.Polatti, A.Cooper

Yellow Card: M.Pedic

MFC: N.Scerri 2, D.Bosiak, C.Apostolakis, M.Nguyen, S.Jesensek

Yellow Card: N.Scerri, C.Apostolakis

Red Card: M.Nguyen

FC Collingwood v FC Prahran

FC Collingwood would have to pull off a miracle to avoid 12th spot on the ladder, the automatic drop will see them playing in the 2011 State LEAGUE Championship. Two goals a piece to J.Verikakis and M.Algoohrabi ensured all three points were headed over the Yarra to Prahran as FC Collingwood capitulated. FC Prahran is not out of the woods themselves holding on to 8th spot with six rounds remaining. In a clean match FC Prahran never looked like loosing, booting six goals to three shattering the Woods hopes of crawling out of the bottom.

FC Collingwood 3 FC Prahran 6

FCP goals: J.Verikakis 2, M.Algoohrabi 2, C.Mogaoi, B.Armstrong

Yellow Card: C.Mogaoi

FCC: M.Badway 3.

Yellow Card: M.Brooks

Pascoe Vale FC v FC Essendon

The 2010 Champions came out to face the 2009 Champions in a battle of the giants. It was the tightest battle for 30 minutes with FC Essendon looking most likely to hand out Pascoe Vales first lose for the season, but it wasn't to be. Pascoe Vale turned the switch and kicked five unanswered goals in seven minutes to once again reinstate themselves as the best V-LEAGUE premiership side in history. FC Essendon are by no means safe and with only five points separating them from the bottom four, its no surprise FCE put up such a fight only to run out of steam in the last seven min.

Pascoe Vale FC 9 FC Essendon 5

PVFC goals: R.Ferguson 4, J.Da Silva 2, A.Azzam 2, J.Toro

Yellow Card: A.Azzam

FCE: A.Stevanovic 2, B.Lujanica 2, I.Stevanovic

Yellow Card: A.Stevanovic



Metropolitan FC (sky blue) destroy Ashburton FC in a battle for second spot.



Pascoe Vale FC (in black and white) make it 15 wins out of 15 games.



CF Brunswick (red) restricted the champions Fitzroy FC with a tearing 7-1 scoreline.



Jonnathan Barrientos lines one up against Mickleham FC in a last minute victory.

Ashburton FC v Metropolitan FC

Early season favorites Metropolitan FC in 4th spot were facing 2nd placed Ashburton FC, in what appeared to be the clash of the night, Ashburton had no answers for a red hot Metropolitan FC. Three goals to A.Redzepovic and I.Zilic, ensured all three points were in the bag for the Sky Blues with clinical passing and deadly finishing the Green Machine were in all sorts. The Sky Blues were back to winning ways and winning well with Y.Avdic shooting from everywhere possible on goal. Ashburton need to regroup and rediscover its passing game while Metropolitan can look forward to round 20 were they meet Pascoe Vale FC in what should be the match of the season.

Ashburton FC 2 Metropolitan FC 9

MFC goals: A.Redzepovic 3, I.Zilic 3, Y.Avdic 2, D.Redzepovic

Yellow Card: Nil

AFC: L.Correa 2.

Yellow Card: L.Correa

CF Brunswick v Fitzroy FC

With both teams struggling at the moment, it shaped up to be an evenly contested clash. With no D.Rasoulzadeh in goals for Fitzroy, CF Brunswick pressed and stretched FFC's no 2 between the sticks. Fitzroy looked flat and found it hard to break down an impressive CFB defense, finding them exposed to the quick counter attack.

The 2007-08 Champions, CFB hit the front and kicked seven unanswered goals rattling Rasoulzadeh Seniors men in the best performance of the season for the All Reds.

Fitzroy FC, duel premiers in 2008 and 2010-11 seasons were outclassed and outplayed on a night were most mid table teams dropped valuable points.

CF Brunswick 7 Fitzroy FC 1

CFB goals: R.Roslain 3, M.Nyadzayo 3, M.Piga

Yellow Card: C.Cicedag

FFC: I.Arjoman

Yellow Card: Nil

Hume FC v Brimbank FC

Just when you thought you've seen it all, out comes Hume FC and inform Brimbank FC for the last clash on the card. Brimbank FC looked good in the last couple of rounds with Jason Barrientos breathing life into a stagnate list. Unfortunately Hume FC didn't read the scripted and absolutely smashed Brimbank 10 - 1 with M.Dixon and R.Cuculoglu running muck. BFC are in 2nd last spot and are serious relegation material, while Hume FC is shacking down the top four.

Hume FC 10 Brimbank FC 1

HFB goals: M.Dixon 3, R.Cuculoglu 2, M.Nabir 2, M.Parlak, A.Husseini, M.Tankir

Yellow Card: Nil

BFC: J.Barrientos

Yellow Card: F.Causevic

V-League

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Pascoe Vale FC	15	15	0	0	133	47	86	45
2 Metropolitan FC	16	11	1	4	132	70	62	34
3 Nth Melbourne FC	15	11	0	4	82	54	28	33
4 Ashburton FC	16	10	2	4	98	82	16	32
5 Hume FC	16	8	2	6	80	72	8	26
6 FC Essendon	16	6	3	7	89	102	-13	21
7 Fitzroy FC	16	6	2	8	72	96	-24	20
8 FC Prahran	16	6	0	10	74	101	-27	18
9 CF Brunswick	16	5	1	10	71	101	-30	16
10 Mickleham FC	16	4	2	10	93	99	-6	14
11 Brimbank FC	16	4	0	12	56	94	-38	12
12 FC Collingwood	16	2	1	13	48	110	-62	7

Round 16 Results

Wed Feb 23rd

- 6:30 Nth Melbourne FC v Mickleham FC 7 - 6
- 7:15 FC Collingwood v FC Prahran 3 - 6
- 8:00 Pascoe Vale FC v FC Essendon 9 - 5
- 8:45 Ashburton FC v Metropolitan FC 2 - 9
- 9:30 CF Brunswick v Fitzroy FC 7 - 1
- 10:15 Brimbank FC v Hume FC 1 - 10

Round 17 Clashes

Wed Mar 2nd

- 6:30 FC Collingwood v Hume FC
- 7:15 CF Brunswick v Metropolitan FC
- 8:00 Ashburton FC v Nth Melbourne FC
- 8:45 FC Essendon v Fitzroy FC
- 9:30 Brimbank FC v Mickleham FC
- 10:15 Pascoe Vale FC v FC Prahran

State League Championship

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 FC Melbourne	14	12	0	2	70	38	32	36
2 Elsternwick FC	13	9	1	3	80	56	24	28
3 FC Balwyn	13	8	2	3	95	57	38	26
4 FC Footscray	14	8	1	5	87	61	26	25
5 Melb Uni FC	14	6	0	8	61	87	-26	18
6 FC Carlton	14	5	1	8	79	80	-1	16
7 Albert Park FC	14	5	1	8	78	90	-2	16
8 FC Geelong	14	5	0	9	57	66	-9	15
9 Bentleigh FC	14	4	0	10	71	110	-39	12
10 Doncaster FC	12	3	0	9	57	90	-33	9

State League Championship Season Round 14 Sun Feb 20th

- 7:40 Elsternwick FC v FC Footscray 7 - 5
- 8:20 Melb Uni FC v FC Carlton 6 - 2
- 9:00 Bentleigh FC v FC Melbourne 4 - 3
- 9:40 Doncaster FC v FC Geelong 9 - 0
- 10:20 Albert Park FC v FC Balwyn 7 - 5

State League Championship Season Round 15 Sun Feb 27th

- 7:40 Bentleigh FC v Albert Park FC
- 8:20 Elsternwick FC v FC Melbourne
- 9:00 FC Carlton v FC Geelong
- 9:40 Doncaster FC v FC Balwyn
- 10:20 Melb Uni FC v FC Footscray

State League Top Scorers

- 1. Rob Zadwany FCB 35 goals
- 2. Peter Kraklt EFC 33 goals
- 3. Matt Italiano FCB 27 goals

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OAKLEIGH CANNONS



1

GREEN GULLY CAVALIERS



0

Match Details

Oakleigh Cannons:
Peter ZOIS (C, GK), Ramazan TAVSANOGLU, James CUMMING, Anthony BRAN, Aristidis DRAKOS, Luke WALKER, James DOWNEY (Craig GOODWIN 88'), Frankie LAGANA, James ROBINSON, Stephen HATZIKOSTAS (Dane MILOVANOVIC 71'), Bonel OBRADOVIC (Ricky DIACO 81').

Unused Subs: Neven ANTIC, Daniel NEESHAM.

Goal: Obradovic 37'
Yellow cards: Zois 34', Milo- vanovic 74', Robinson 89'.

Green Gully Cavaliers:
Cameron DRAKE, Brent FISHER (Mathew SANDERS 62'), Jeffrey FLEMING (C), Jason HAYNE, Graham HOCKLESS, Daniel JONES, Mile MEDJEDOVIC, Jonathan MUNOZ (Pasquale VIZZARI 70'), Ryan OLLERTON, Nikola ROGANOVIC (GK), Andy VARGAS.

Unused Subs: Michael ANDER- SON, Hamid BASMA, Michael O'FARRELL

Yellow Cards: Hayne 26', Munoz 65', Ollerton 89', Vargas 90+2'.

Cannons overcome defending champions

By Robert Di Fabio

A wonderful finish by Bonel Obradovic was enough to seal the points for a rejuvenated Oakleigh Cannons outfit against Green Gully at Jack Edwards Reserve on Friday night.

Following an impressive 3-2 victory over Northcote City in the opening round, the Cannons backed up their winning start with a hard fought performance to award the Cavaliers with their first taste of defeat in 2011.

In a contest which saw few chances arise at either end, both teams were defensively sound and well organised at the back.

The game started off in frantic pace, within the opening minute former Melbourne Heart and current Oakleigh Cannon's goal-keeper Peter Zois was called into action. A wonderful through-ball pierced the Oakleigh defence; however the Zois' quickly rushed off his line to clear the ball.

The opening ten minutes saw both sides playing with caution, holding onto possession while attempting to outsmart the opposition reminiscent of a chess encounter.

In the 15th minute, a Green Gully drive from the edge of the box eclipsed the post, unfortunately that was as close as it got for the Cavaliers.

Following that opportunity, Oakleigh applied the pressure on the Cannon's defence with several impressive runs down either flank and dangerous crosses in the penalty area, however no rewards seemed imminent.

Nevertheless, the Cannons' faithful had reason to cheer in the 35th minute. A suburb goal characterised by team unity and workmanship was in fruition. A pulsating run down the right flank by Luke

Walker played in James Robinson who quickly weaved his way around the Gully defence to lay the ball off the Obradovic who then played a fabulous 1-2 with Robinson to slice open the Gully defence. With only the keeper to beat Obradovic shot with a tremendous curling strike in top right hand corner from the edge of the 18 yard box. A goal for the video real.

The remainder of the opening interval saw few half chances by either side. The Cannons entered the half time break with the slender goal advantage.

The second interval commenced at a high tempo pace, both outfits eager to cement their superiority on one another. Following a lacklustre opening period by the Cavaliers' standards, Lupo Lapsanski's men were out to prove a point. The Cavaliers applied pressure down the left back with a quality cut back from Graham Hockless only to be intercepted by the Oakleigh defence.

A high boot by Cavalier's Johnathan Moinoz on Aristidis Drakos earned Oakleigh a free-kick. The subsequent free-kick from Drakos nearly held an embarrassing moment for Oakleigh stopper Nikola.

A curling left foot 30 metre cross from the right wing eclipses the surrounding pack of players and forces the keeper into a smart over-head save for a corner. A moment of anxiety and tension was present surrounding Jack Edwards Reserve.

An additional late challenge from Moinoz in the 71st minute again earned the commanding Oakleigh competitor a yellow ticket and subsequently forced James Downey off with a knock. However club officials have confirmed it's nothing serious and



Match winner: Bonel Obradovic ensures Oakleigh Cannons takes maximum points for the second week in a row. Photo: ANITA MILAS

should be alright to take part next week.

Following an eventful period Green Gully almost found themselves back in the contest. In the 72nd minute Jason Hayne cuts back a swift ball for Mathew Sanders to finish, however a lounging challenge from centre half Anthony Bran was enough for Sanders to miscue the shot from barely six yards out.

The Cavaliers efforts were left unrewarded. After some impressive inter-play in the final third there was no way past the Cannons' defensive unit who were commanding, well organised and allowed no trespassers within the

Oakleigh danger zone.

Cavaliers' centre back Anthony Bran had an outstanding performance, his organisational skills accompanied with his dominant aerial ability proved pivotal in the outcome of this fixture.

As a result, the Cannons held on to record an exasperating victory over the reigning VPL champions. It's an enormous confidence boost for an outfit ambitious to cement a footprint in the title race.

James Robinson shared his thoughts post game and commented "Gully are reigning champions from last year so they set the standard and collectively we've come out and produced a good, team,

battling performance."

When asked about his side's chances of making it three from three next week he responded with "it's down to ourselves. Not worrying about anybody else, if we concentrate hard on our own performance I'm sure the results will follow."

The Cannon's will fancy themselves at home to early strugglers Springvale White Eagles who leaked six goals against South Melbourne in round 2.

Meanwhile, the Cavaliers will have to quickly bounce back with hard-hitting away trip to Melbourne Knights.



Green Gully keeper Cameron Drake dives in desperation but can't stop Obradovic's strike. Photo: ANITA MILAS



Green Gully's Daniel Jones and Oakleigh's Ari Drakos take to the air to contest the ball. Photo: ANITA MILAS

NORTHCOTE CITY



1

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS



1

Match Details

Northcote City:
Chris Petropoulos, Nick Tzoulis (Paul Savio 86'), Kristian Konstantinidis, Harry Kinigopoulos, Hayden D'Agostino, Nicholas Curtis, Eddie Soares, Samuel Torrens (George McHeileh 77'), Glen Trifiro (Burak Kocak 71'), Jason Trifiro, Trent Rixon.

Yellow cards: Konstantinidis
Red cards: None
Goal: Konstantinidis 87'.

Melbourne Knights:
Martin John, Ryan Filipovic, Ben Surey, Meyer Carlos De Camago Junior, Josip Magdic (Craig Sweeney 46'), Jean Dubois, Daniel Dragicevic (Jacob Colosimo 72'), Josip Kozic (Shaun Romein 68'), Anthony Colosimo, Leo Shin, Matheiu-Luc Welmant.

Yellow cards: Dragicevic, Sweeney
Red cards: None
Goals: Romein 81'.

Blues fight back to snatch a share of the spoils

By Tony Persoglia

IN a lacklustre encounter which rarely kicked out of first gear, Northcote City could consider themselves lucky to snare a draw against a much improved Melbourne Knights at John Cain Memorial Park.

The Knights were led by a stoic back line which defended admirably away from home against a Blues outfit eager to impress in front of a boisterous home crowd.

A goal from substitute Shaun Romein just nine minutes from time appeared to give the visitors the three points it had desperately worked for, but a typically gutsy Northcote grabbed a scrappy equalizer with barely three minutes left to play thanks to a goal from recruit Kristian Konstantinidis.

In truth, the Blues should

have had the lead after 5 minutes, but Nick Curtis failed to capitalise on a golden opportunity. Glen Trifiro troubled nothing but the ball boys with a wayward free-kick just minutes later.

In a match where both teams failed to hold possession for extended periods, the Knights had their first serious opportunity on the quarter hour when Josip Magdic flashed over the bar from long range.

The remainder of the first period was littered with half-chances, Rixon and Soares causing concern for the visitors, yet the most clear cut chance came on 39 minutes when Chris Petropoulos pulled off a fantastic reflex save from the marauding Matt Welmant.

Daniel Dragicevic was quick to pounce on the loose ball, but his result-



Knights keeper Martin John is unable to prevent Kristian Konstantinidis' late equaliser from finding the net. Photo: PETER PSARROS

ing goal-bound strike was cleared off the line by the impressive Konstantinidis.

Melbourne wielded the changes in the second half, and wrestled the ascendancy from a new-look Blues midfield, who were held together by Sydney recruit Jason Trifiro.

The game lifted a notch on the hour, with Rixon and Glen Trifiro conspir-

ing to miss what seemed a certain shot on goal, only to see the resulting counter-attack end up with a strike from Jean Dubois, who failed to keep his shot on target.

The final ten minutes brought the most pulsating football of the match, and after a goal from each side, the match remained deadlocked at the final whistle as the heavens

opened over Darebin.

With each club only snaring a point from the opening two rounds, they will look forward to next week, keen to open their winning accounts. The Blues resume their rivalry with St Albans Saints at Churchill Reserve on Sunday. The Knights pay host to Green Gully in the battle of the west on Friday night.



Northcote's Glen Trifiro evades the outstretched leg of Knights' Jean Dubois.
Photo: PETER PSARROS



Northcote City are delirious after debutant Kristian Konstantinidis snatches a last gasp point from the Knights Photo: PETER PSARROS

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SPRINGVALE W EAGLES



4

SOUTH MELBOURNE



6

Match Details

Springvale White Eagles
2 - Adam Ewin; 7 - Tome Racunica; 8 - Gordan Mrdic; 9 - Milos Lujic; 10 - Dejan Radojicic; 12 - Dushan Nikolic (4 - Boris Bajic 75'); 16 - Dominic D'Angelo; 17 - Zoran Vukas (24 - Lewis Karanicolas 80'); 18 - Nikolas Veljovic (11 - Rados Tomic 75'); 19 - Goran Zoric; 23 - Scott Agustin
(Scorers: Goran Zoric 28', 33', Zoran Vukas 65'pk, Tome Racunica 87')

South Melbourne Hellas
1 - Stefaan Sardelic; 3 - Rhodri Payne; 4 - Steven O'Dor; 6 - Steven Topalovic; 8 - Carl Recchia; 9 - Gianni De Nittis (14 - Kamal Ibrahim 46'); 10 - Kliment Taseski; 11 - Jesse Krnecic; 15 - Fernando De Moraes (24 - Nick Jacobs 89'); 18 - Marinos Gasparis; 23 - Sebastian Petrovic (25 - Kyle Joryeff 46')
(Scorers: De Moraes 50', Ibrahim 58', Taseski 66', Recchia 79', Krnecic 87', 89')

Man of the Match: Fernando De Moraes (South Melbourne)
Venue: Serbian Sports Centre (White Eagles Stadium)
Date: Friday 25 February 2011
Crowd: 1,000

Game, Set and Match for Hellas!

By John Kyrou

It was a tennis scoreline at the Serbian Sports Centre on Friday night as South Melbourne Hellas defeated the Springvale White Eagles 6-4, in what will surely be one of the more remarkable Victorian Premier League matches of 2011.

In a match that saw an astonishing eight goals scored in the second half, South scored all six of its goals in the final 45 minutes to complete the comeback following a 2-0 deficit at the half time break.

Springvale began the game determined to win its first points for 2011 following consecutive defeats in their opening two Premier League matches. Former South forward Goran Zoric played his first match for the White Eagles this season and it was his inclusion in the home side's starting eleven that caused South all sorts of problems in the first half. It was Zoric who won a penalty for the home side in the 24th minute after being fouled in the area by Sebastian Petrovic, however luckily for South the resulting penalty was blasted into the crossbar by Gordan Mrdic. South's luck ran out only minutes later when Zoric opened the scoring and then doubled the home side's lead with two excellently taken goals. His first was scored with a 25 yard effort that beat Stefaan Sardelic, with his second scored by cutting in from the left and beating two defenders before rifling a shot into the bottom left corner.

South coach Eddie Krnecic immediately made changes during the halftime period and substituted both Gianni De

Nittis and Petrovic with Kamal Ibrahim and Kyle Joryeff respectively. An early goal was desperately needed and it was Fernando De Moraes who stepped up for the away side five minutes into the half, when he turned his marker and scored from the edge of the area with a left footed shot that beat goalkeeper Scott Agustin at his near post. The goal was De Moraes' 49th Premier League goal for the Club, putting the midfielder in outright eighth position (overtaking Doug Brown) in South's all-time highest goal scorers in National/State/Premier League competition.

All of a sudden South were back in the contest and Springvale's momentum and confidence had been clearly dented. South continued to attack in numbers and equalised eight minutes later when Agustin spilt the ball after going outside his goal area. This allowed the debuting Ibrahim the simple task of passing the ball into the empty net to score his first goal for the away side. Kliment Taseski, also making his South debut on the night, then completed South's amazing turnaround by scoring a sensational left-footed goal from outside the area. The two boys had made an immediate impact after arriving at the Club on loan from A-League side Melbourne Heart.

The away side clearly now had all the run and continued to attack, trying to score a fourth goal to wrap up the three points. However South's defensive frailties were exposed again, when against the run of play Springvale were awarded a penalty following a shirt pull by captain Steven O'Dor on Milos Lujic in the area.



Jess Krnecic's put the amazing match beyond Springvale's reach with a burst of two goals in the final minutes. PHOTO: CINDY NITSOS

Sardelic went the right way but couldn't get enough of his hand on the ball to keep it out of the net as Zoran Vukas converted Springvale's spot-kick to make the score 3-3. However amazingly, South regained the lead only a short time later, when a stinging shot from outside the area by De Moraes rattled the crossbar before falling nicely for Carl Recchia to head into the empty net. Marinos Gasparis then played Jesse Krnecic a wonderful through-ball that the forward finished after rounding Agustin before rolling the ball into the empty goal.

With a 5-3 lead and with time running out, it seemed like South had the three points in the bag. However to Springvale's credit, the home side

continued fighting right until the end and scored again after 87 minutes. A cut-back from the right was parried into Tome Racunica's path and the White Eagles player smashed the ball home to make the score 5-4 and send nerves around the Serbian Sports Centre. However Krnecic made absolutely sure of the three points by chipping Agustin after De Moraes put him through one-on-one with the White Eagles goalkeeper. De Moraes had enjoyed an outstanding match but disappointingly hobbled off the ground with an injury following a bad tackle from Lujic that saw the Springvale player only cautioned when on another day the card may have been another colour. The full-time whistle

moments later completed a remarkably entertaining match for neutral spectators and, in the end, for South supporters as well.

South Melbourne's next match is against the Victorian Training Centre (VTC) on Wednesday 2 March at Port Melbourne's SS Anderson Reserve, with kick-off at 20:30. Spectators are reminded that the mid-week matches against the VTC this season count for competition points and as a result should be treated like any normal Premier League fixture. Next Friday 4 March,

Springvale travel to Jack Edwards Reserve to face the Oakleigh Cannons, with that match also kicking off at 20:30.



Man of the match Fernando De Moraes gets the South Melbourne comeback on the way.
PHOTO: CINDY NITSOS



New boy Kliment Tasevski wastes no time to make his mark back in the VPL after joining South from Heart for a brief loan period. PHOTO: CINDY NITSOS

HUME CITY



2

RICHMOND EAGLES



2

Match Details

Hume City: L.Acevski, M.Bosevski, S.Pace, S.Dehaini (M.McGough 85'), R.Thompson, M.Pistinizi (A.Doig 66'), T.Baser (D.Delic 58'), S.Bozinovski, A.Vlahos, R.Cardoza, S.Weir.

Goals: Thompson 8' 41'
Yellow Cards: Weir 51' Dehaini 48' Vlahos 50' Cardoza 65'
Red Card: Vlahos 52'

Richmond: S.Gal, E.Karahan, R.Antoniadis (A.Viola 61'), M.Bissinger, T.Purcell, M.Catalano (M.Eterovic 65'), C.O'Hare, J.Hoffman, A.Kovacic, S.Wilson, M.Ferrante (D.Tsiaras 82').

Goals: Ferrante 25' O'Hare 68'
Yellow Card: Bissinger 3'
Red Card: Bissinger 62'

Man of the Match: E.Karahan (Richmond)
Venue: Broadmeadows Valley Park
Crowd: 400

Eagles Swoop To Share Points

By Mark Boric

HUME City hosted Richmond on Sunday, in a rematch of last year's Preliminary Final.

Richmond welcomed back Antun Kovacic from trials overseas, and he was brought straight into the starting line-up, along with Jason Hoffman, a loan signing from Melbourne Heart.

Hume made changes to the side which drew 1-1 at St Albans on the opening weekend, with one enforced by the sending off of Isiyan Erdogan in that match. Tansel Baser came into the team, along with Sam Dehaini, Mark Pistinizi and former Eagle Richie Cardozo as player/coach Andy Vlahos rang the changes.

There was an early yellow card for Mitch Bissinger in the third minute as he dived in to win back the ball after it had gotten away from him. The first chance of the game came three minutes later, Slave Bozinovski heading a free kick from the left over the goal. Some good closing down from Stuart Wilson produced an opening for Richmond three minutes after that, the ball skewed sideways at the top of the box and falling to Chris O'Hare who got into the area and fired a weak shot at the near post which failed to trouble Lou Acevski.

Hoffman then made his first impression on the game, a run across the top of the box followed by a lay off to Wilson who shot just over the crossbar. Hume went on the attack instantly after this, Cardozo breaking through the middle

and finding Vlahos on the right, the ball then moved on to Ross Thompson at the corner of the penalty area who unleashed a shot beyond Stjepan Gal to give Hume the lead in the eighth minute.

Richmond tried to respond, and a great ball from Michael Ferrante found Michael Catalano on the left but his cross failed to get past the first defender. Thompson produced a save from Gal when latching onto a knock down before Erhan Karahan forced Acevski to save his header after Hoffman had knocked the ball back after a free kick had flown across the penalty area.

A good cross from Pistinizi saw Thompson head over goal from inside ten yards in the nineteenth minute. Karahan topped off a good run with a fine cross that was headed away for a corner as Wilson arrived late at the far post. After O'Hare tracked back to win the ball in his own half, his pass just reached Karahan ahead of Vlahos and the Richmond acting skipper found Hoffman in space down the left. Hoffman brought the ball forward deep into the corner before pulling it back to the top of the box where Ferrante drew the Eagles level with a brilliant low drive into the bottom corner.

When O'Hare was bundled over contesting a header a free-kick was paid to Richmond on the edge of the box, which Ferrante hit into the wall and Wilson shot just wide with the rebound. The Eagles then had a penalty handball appeal turned down, with the



The ref is right on hand to watch Stuart Wilson (Richmond) tackle Richie Cardozo. Timmy Purcell is also on the scene. Photo: JOHN PUNSHON

ball then finding Hoffman who was ruled offside. A cross by Steven Weir on the left almost saw Karahan score an own goal as he tried to cut it out, the ball rolling just to the outside of the post.

Pistinizi then headed a partly-cleared free-kick back into the box, the ball falling to Weir who headed at Gal from close range as the keeper bore down on him. Another free-kick in the forty-first minute would bring about a goal for the home side. As the ball in was not cleared a scramble ensued in the box, with Baser eventually able to cut the ball back for Thompson to grab his second goal of the afternoon. When the teams entered the rooms shortly after, Hume maintained their 2-1 advantage.

A good cross from Bissinger in the forty-sixth minute went to the back post where Karahan put it back into the middle before Hume rushed it clear. Referee Alex Lord was then a busy man, firstly booking Dehaini as he brought down Timmy Purcell as he broke over the halfway line. A minute later Vlahos was booked for chopping down Ross Antoniadis as he tried to bring the ball out of defence. Three minutes later, having chased Gal and the ball right to

the touchline Vlahos slammed the ball away after a goal-kick was awarded, picking up his second yellow card and reducing his side to ten men.

A cross from Karahan rather fortuitously found its way to O'Hare who turned to shoot from eight yards but had his effort blocked. The game was back to ten men against ten as Antun Kovacic spent time on the sidelines having a cut to his head bandaged up. Cardozo had a free-kick deflected just over the bar and O'Hare had another shot blocked. The game had opened up, and Pistinizi blasted over the goal in the fifty-eighth minute after Thompson had laid the ball off to him.

Four minutes later Bissinger joined Vlahos in the dressing rooms, picking up a second yellow card for pulling a player back in the right corner. From the free-kick Gal saved a header from Dehaini. Gal then denied Thompson who tried his luck from distance. A free-kick to the far post saw Kovacic lay the ball square and Richmond appealed for handball as they had a shot blocked. In the sixty-eighth minute Richmond would get back on level terms, as a cross from Ferrante saw Purcell strike the post with an acrobatic

volley before O'Hare slammed the rebound into the roof of the net.

A long range strike from Ferrante saw Acevski parry the ball, but O'Hare was ruled offside as he pounced on the rebound. Gal was off his line smartly to save from Weir after a long ball was allowed to bounce just outside the penalty area letting him through. O'Hare shot wide on the turn before a Hoffman run down the left saw him cut in and have a shot parried by Acevski before being cleared.

Weir again latched onto a bouncing ball in the box and had Gal beaten only for Karahan to get back and clear from the goal-line. An cross from Hoffman as he cut into the box on the right was cleared after being played back centrally by Mate Eterovic at the far post. Into stoppage time substitute Mark McGough's pass through to Weir saw the ball roll just wide of the post. At the finish it would remain 2-2, honours shared in an entertaining encounter.

Next week Hume City will host Heidelberg United, whilst Richmond will also be at home as they face Dandenong Thunder. Both games are on Sunday.



Michael Catalano (Richmond) beats the tackle by Andy Vlahos. Photo: JOHN PUNSHON

DANDENONG THUNDER



5

ST ALBANS SAINTS



2

Match Details

Dandenong Thunder 5
(S Cooke 38', 45+1', 50', M
Theodore 43', C Taylor 78')

St Albans Saints 2
(T Uskok 13', T Razov 47')

Venue: George Andrews
Reserve
Crowd: 2750
Man of the Match: Stephen
Cooke
Red Card: Tomi Razov 73'

DANDENONG THUNDER:
1. Stuart WEBSTER, 5. Steven
GRAY, 15. Shane REXHEPI,
2. Kyle LAPHAM, 6. Archie
TOMIC, 20. Luke SHERBON,
23. Chris TAYLOR, 8. Matthew
THEODORE (10. Alex RO-
JAS 78'), 9. Veton KORCARI
(18. Nathan KNOX 81'), 14.
Stephen COOKE (17. Liam
KEARNY 78'), 3. Ben HAR-
RISON.

Unused Subs: 4. Chachi
ELMAZI, 26. Sermin SADIK-
OVSKI

ST. ALBANS SAINTS:
20. Ante LONCARIC (1. Frano
SARIC 72'), 9. Josip LON-
CARIC, 16. Tomislav USKOK,
23. Tomislav MILARDOVIC,
8. Liam CANNELL, 4. Maks
CUZE (18. Stefan PIORKOWSKI
59'), 10. Tomi RAZOV, 5.
Brian CHESSON, 14. Mark
PALEKA, 17. Daniel VISEVIC,
21. Martin HANA (7. Goran
JOZELJIC 59')

Unused Subs: 6. Alan PALEKA,
19. Michael GRGIC

THUNDER COOKE UP A STORM!

By Mark Ivkovic

A stunning hat-trick from Stephen Cooke has handed Dandenong a convincing 5-2 win over the St. Albans Saints on Saturday evening at George Andrews Reserve.

A crowd of just under 3000 witnessed a devastating display from the hosts as they gave the new kids on the block a lesson on what it takes to be playing in the Alanic Victorian Premier League.

The hosts took control of the game and had the visitors on the back foot from the outset. Captain Veton Koracari should have given his side an early lead as he was left unmarked at the far post but his headed effort went just wide.

Stephen Cooke thought he had given his side the lead two minutes later after a mix up in the Saints defence allowed him to slot the ball into the back of the net but the assistant referee corrected ruled that he was in an offside position.

Dandenong were then left to rue their missed chances as the Saints took the lead against the run of play in the 13th minute. Tomi Razov's free kick on the edge of the box found the head of Tomislav Uskok who made no mistake with a powerful headed effort that sent the traveling supporters into raptures.

St. Albans should have doubled their lead ten minutes later when Martin Hana had a golden chance inside the 6 yard area but he could only direct his shot straight into the path of Stuart Webster and Maks Cuze's follow up effort was cleared off the line by Shane Rexhepi.

Dandenong began to regain control of the game as the St. Albans midfield was almost non-existent at times leaving them with gaping holes at the back and allowing the Thunder to spread the ball around the park with relative ease.

The hosts then got back on level pegging in the 38th minute when Matthew Theodore was given acres of space on the right hand flank and put in a superb ball that found Cooke

on the edge of the area. The Thunder striker brought the ball down expertly well on his chest and his well hit strike on the turn gave Ante Loncaric no chance.

Matthew Theodore then produced a moment of magic as he gave his side the lead five minutes later. A great ball this time from Chris Taylor found Theodore in exactly the same spot as Cooke only moments before and the youngster pulled off a Wayne Rooney-esque bicycle kick that sent the huge home crowd into delirium.

And on the stroke of half time Dandenong were awarded a very dubious and contentious penalty by referee Kevin Docherty. Everyone in attendance at George Andrews Reserve was left bemused as to why Docherty pointed to the spot and issued a caution to Tomislav Milardovic. Nonetheless, Cooke sent Loncaric the wrong way for his second of the game and the Thunder's 3rd in 8 minutes to take a 3-1 lead into the half-time break.

Two minutes into the second half and the Saints got exactly what the doctor ordered. Some great build up play by the St. Albans midfield saw Liam Cannell cut inside the right hand side and unleash a stinging strike which Webster could only parry into the path of Tomi Razov and the Saints midfielder comfortably tucked away the rebound to put his side back into the game.

However the Saints joy was short lived as the Thunder extended their lead only three minutes later when Theodore again found Cooke unmarked at the far post and the new recruit for Dandenong grabbed the first hat-trick of the AVPL season.

St. Albans should have pegged one back almost immediately as a fantastic ball in from Daniel Visevic only needed a slight touch to go into the back of the net but as was the problem for much of the game for the Saints, there was just no numbers inside the attacking penalty area.

The Saints were then forced



Thunder's Matthew Theodore scored with a bicycle kick. Photos: STEVE STAREK

to use their final substitution on their goalkeeper Ante Loncaric as he was suffering from heavy concussion after a strong challenge from Veton Koracari earlier on in the game.

60 seconds after that change, Tomi Razov was handed his marching orders after yet another controversial and bemusing refereeing decision. Razov was fouled from behind and was then hit across the back of his head. In retaliation, Razov threw the ball back at Ben Harrison and to everyone's surprise was handed a straight red card.

Moments later another terrible refereeing decision denied St. Albans a clear cut penalty when Visevic's great body strength saw him get in front of Shane Rexhepi and with only Webster to beat the Saints attacker was clearly man handled and brought down inside the area but Docherty waved play on and yet again left everyone at the ground stunned.

Chris Taylor then put the icing on the cake for the home side



Hat-trick hero Stephen Cooke on the ball.
Photo: STEVE STAREK

when he smashed home a brilliant finish from just inside the area to seal all three points for the Dandenong Thunder.

The Saints must now dust



Tomislav Uskok scores for the Saints in a crowded penalty area.
Photo: STEVE STAREK



Stephen Cooke equalises for Thunder and is flying on his way to a hat-trick.
Photo: STEVE STAREK

HEIDELBERG UNITED	1
	1
BENTLEIGH GREENS	1
	1

Match Details

Heidelberg United
Saso ALEXOVSKI, Hamlet AR-MENIAN, Evan CHRISTODOU-LOU, Osagie EDERARO, Craig ELVIN, Richard GREER, Yared HAILEMELEKOT, Michael KELLY, Griffin MCMASTER, George SLEFENDORFAS, Steve MARTIN. Subs: Leslie DOUMBALIS, Jason KOUTSODONTIS, Andrew NABBOUT, Takanori NISHIMOTO, George PAPADOPOULOS

Goal Scorer: Osagie EDERARO (90+5)

Yellow Cards: Nil
Bentleigh Greens
Scott BULLOCH, Ryan DAVIDSON, Stephen DOWNES, Hayden DOYLE, Peter GAVALAS, Steve LAURIE, Thomas MATTHEWS, Sean MCILROY, Wayne WALLACE, Jack WEBSTER, Aron WILFORD.

Subs: Adam FADLJEVIC, Kile KENNEDY, James MCGARRY, Craig SMART, George STAVIDIS
Goal Scorer: Scott BULLOCH (22)

Yellow Cards: Thomas MATTHEWS (30), Jack WEBSTER ('74), Ryan DAVIDSON ('86)
Red Cards: Peter GAVALAS (21)



Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
Dandenong Thunder	2	2	0	0	6	2	4	6
Oakleigh Cannons	2	2	0	0	4	2	2	6
Bentleigh Greens	2	1	1	0	4	1	3	4
South Melbourne	2	1	1	0	7	5	2	4
Heidelberg Utd	2	1	1	0	2	1	1	4
Hume City	2	0	2	0	3	3	0	2
Northcote City	2	0	1	1	3	4	-1	1
Richmond Eagles	2	0	1	1	2	3	-1	1
Green Gully	2	0	1	1	1	2	-1	1
Melbourne Knights	2	0	1	1	1	2	-1	1
St Albans	2	0	1	1	3	6	-3	1
Springvale WE	3	0	0	3	5	13	-6	0

Ederaro rescues point for Bergers

By Steve Babo

A 95th-minute equaliser by Heidelberg striker Osagie Ederaro has salvaged a point for Heidelberg United when they played host to Bentleigh Greens at Olympic Village on Sunday.

The home side had a numerical advantage for a large portion of the game after a brain-fade from Bentleigh Greens goalkeeper Peter Gavalas left his team a man down after only 20 minutes. Bulloch opened the scoring not long after the travelling side were reduced to ten men, but Heidelberg were not to be denied, as Ederaro slammed home from close range with the last kick of the game.

Heidelberg started the game brightly with key playmaker Saso Alexovski the main architect in many of United's attacking forays. On 14 minutes, Alexovski found himself in space and rifled a shot towards goal with his customary left foot, only to be denied by the upright, fortune for Bentleigh. Bentleigh right-winger Stephen Downes threatened with his pace early and was involved in a swift counter attack which ended up with Bulloch, who had his shot denied by United keeper Griffin McMaster.

On 20 minutes, Greens goalkeeper Gavalas reacted to a behind the ball foul on his teammate by blatantly pushing Heidelberg marksman George Slefendorfas to the ground right in front of the referee Matthew Evan's eyes. The official had no choice but to give the regretful keeper his marching orders, Bentleigh down to 10 men. The lively Downes was sacrificed for reserve goalkeeper Kile Kennedy and a formation re-structure meant that goal poacher Sean McIlroy remained alone at the head of Bentleigh's attack.

Only 2 minutes later, Bentleigh took the lead. Bulloch anticipated a long ball over the top of Heidelberg defence, using his pace to beat the keeper to the ball. His first touch took him away from goal, but with his left foot he was able to get a shot away from the tightest of angles and place the ball past all on-rushing defenders into an empty net, 1-0 to a 10-man

Bentleigh.

The home side enjoyed possession for most of the first half with Alexovski continuously threatening, but could not find a way through a sturdy Greens defence. United coach George Katsakis took a pro-active approach and substituted Michael Kelly for Leslie Doumbalis, which allowed Hamlet Armenian to push up into a right midfield role in an attacking formation re-structure. Bentleigh allowed Heidelberg plenty of possession, resorting to a counter attacking style, which ensured they maintained the lead going into half time.

Early in the second half and Bentleigh nearly had a second. Imposing centre back Aron Wilford had his instinctive shot denied by the upright after a centred header from a deep corner, Heidelberg breathing a sigh of relief. Heidelberg pegged Bentleigh to their penalty area, but could not find an avenue to goal in particular in the air, which suited Bentleigh's height advantage. Armenian continued to threaten down the right providing width for the home side, and the brutal midfield battle between Wayne Wallace and Yared Hailemehelot was one worth keeping an eye on.

Heidelberg midfielder came close to equalising on 70 minutes with a curling 40-yard free kick, which caught Greens keeper Kennedy by surprise, only to be denied by the frame of the goal, the second time in the game for Heidelberg. That was the midfielders last influence on the game as he made way for Takanori Nishimoto.

Heidelberg kept persisting with width play in attempt to stretch the Bentleigh defence, who seemed to comfortably deal with any crosses into the penalty area. United were evidently missing the drive and creativity of ex-A League star Adrian Caceres, who sat this fixture out.

Bentleigh looked to have all but secured a memorable away victory when a last ditch corner by Heidelberg saw a clash of heads between Wallace and McMaster, who had made his way down in attempt to add further pressure to

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a rock-solid Bentleigh defence. Wallace was substituted, and McMaster was left nursing a sore head.

With the final play of the game, an in-swinging corner to the near post was flicked on, falling into the path of Ederaro, who in desperation slammed the ball

home to send the home support at Olympic Village into raptures. The 95th minute equaliser left a dejected Greens outfit, who tirelessly worked hard for each other, only to fall at the last hurdle.

The Greens will need to pick themselves up and prepare for a tough battle with a South Mel-

Alanic VPL Round 3

Wed 2 Mar 8:30PM South Melbourne v N.T.C Anderson Reserve, Port Melb	Sun 6 Mar 3:00PM Hume City v Heidelberg Utd Broadmeadows Valley Park
Fri 4 Mar 8:30PM Oakleigh Cannons v Springvale Jack Edwards Reserve	Sun 6 Mar 5:00PM Sth Melb v Bentleigh Greens John Cain Memorial
Fri 4 Mar 8:30PM Melb Knights v Green Gully Knights Stadium	Sun 6 Mar 5:00PM St Albans Saints v Northcote City Churchill Reserve
Fri 4 Mar 8:30PM Richmond v Dandenong Thunder Kevin Bartlett Reserve	

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